

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

RUE MORGUE



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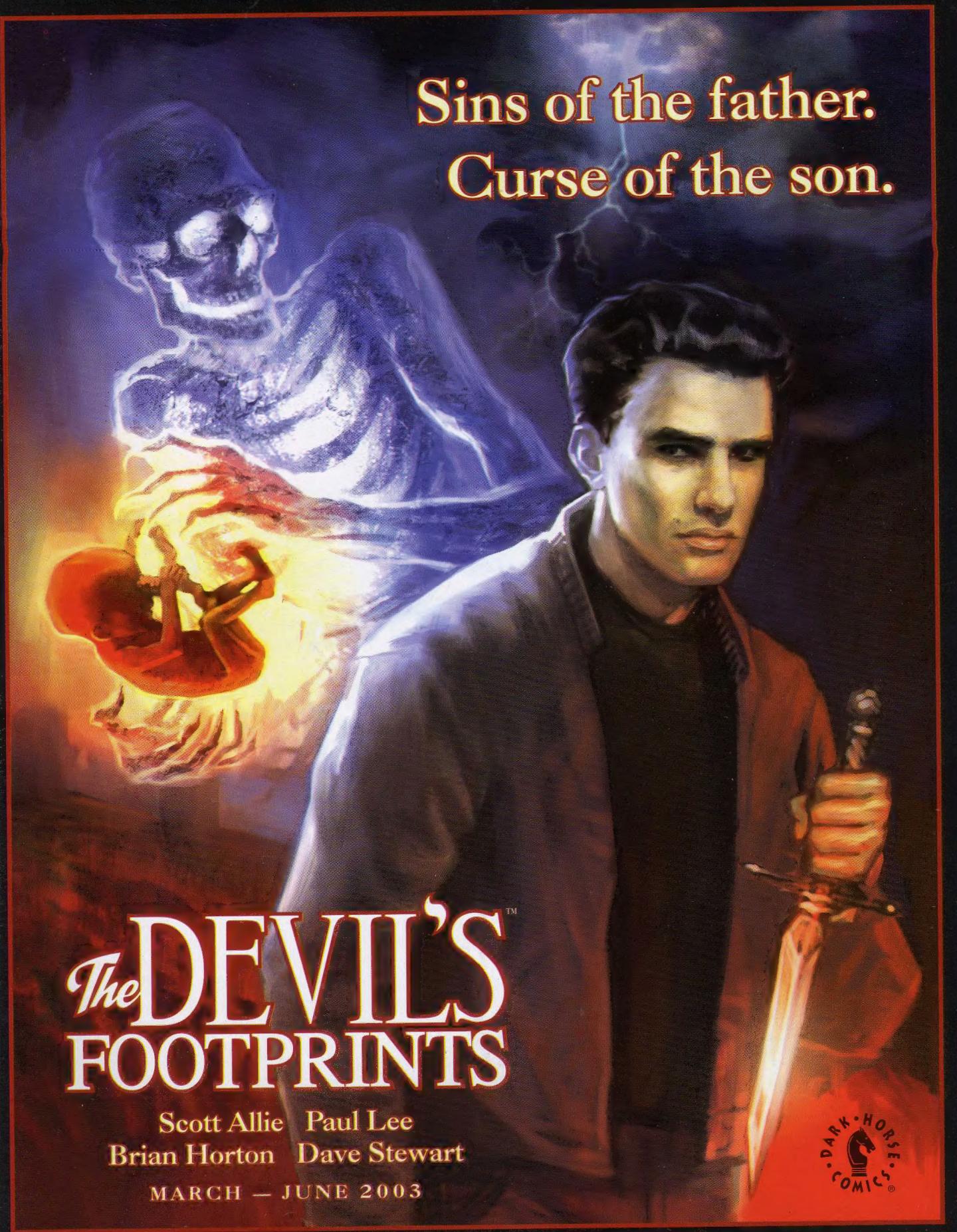
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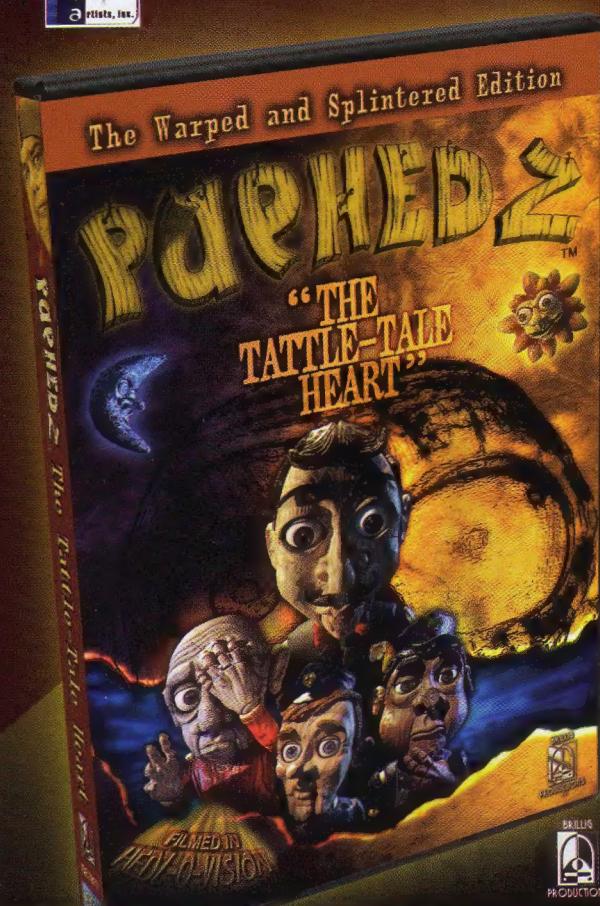
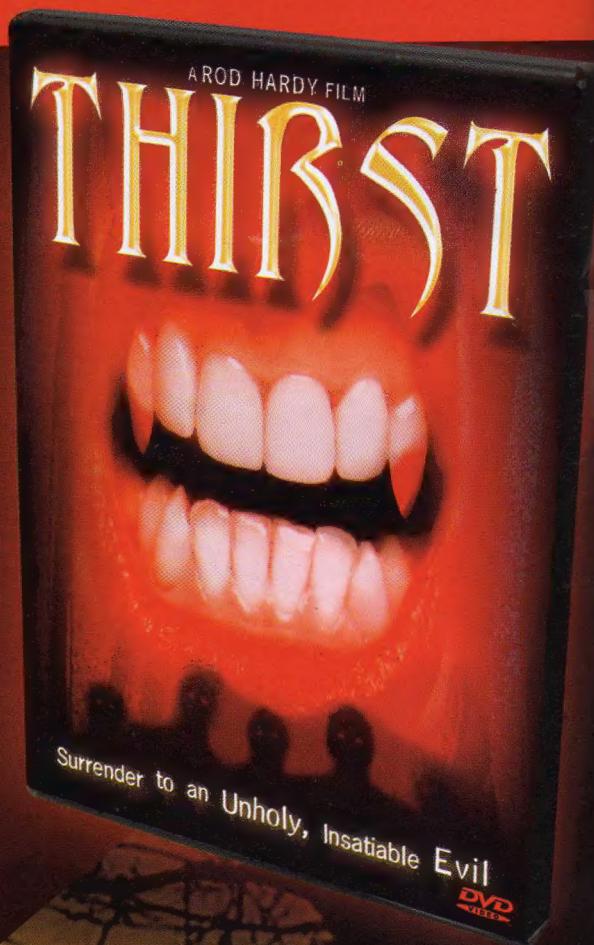
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CLOSED CASKET, OPEN HOUSE 14

This March, Rob Zombie finally wins his two-year battle to get House of 1000 Corpses released. Here's what you can expect from everyone involved, including words from Zombie, Karen Black, Sid Haig and Bill Moseley. **by Rod Gudino and Emma Anderson**

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*An overview of the year in horror, and the Rue Morgue word on what you should have seen and what you should have missed... **by the Rue Morgue Staff!***

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Last year, Fred Vogel and a friend made August Underground, a movie so utterly disturbing that it may prove to be the genre's first truly unwatchable film. Here's their story. Plus, Jorg Buttgereit and Olaf Ittenbach come to DVD! **by Mike Watt**

THE BLOOD SPATTERED GUIDE 30

Beginning in 1968, sleaze merchant Sam Sherman invaded American drive-ins with a demented collection of gore films shot in the Philippines. Now, thirty years later, Image releases The Blood Collection, the definitive catalogue of Sherman's lost legacy. **by Chris Alexander**

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Don't let the name fool you, Cam de Leon's artwork is pretty far from cheerful! See for yourself... **by Gary Pullin**

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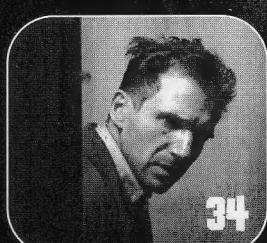
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Note From Underground

Everyone assumes that there are two kinds of people in this world, those who like horror and those who don't. Like most generalizations, there's not much truth to it, primarily because – as we have been saying since the beginning – horror is not, in fact, one thing. Sure, horror fans can be lumped together because they have, by and large, a greater tolerance for gore than those who are not into horror, but that doesn't really take into account that some horror fans aren't into gore.

Like most other things, when it comes to horror, people come at it from different angles; some are titillated by suspense or have a fascination with vampires. Others dig kung fu horror or splatter movies. Still others go for disaster films or ghost stories, murder mysteries or dark dramas, horror comedy or horror erotica.... If one thing is for sure, it's that not everything is everybody's bag.

Never is this more patently obvious as it is with the extreme movie, a tiny sub-genre that finds an audience with only a small percentage of horror fans. Jorg Buttgereit's terminally depressing and utterly tasteless *Nekromantik* is an example, as is Olaf Ittenbach's *Premutos* or, for that matter, Fred Vogel's *August Underground* (see page 24 for the rundown on the lot). These films are to horror fans what I imagine horror films are to people who don't like horror – stuff they just wouldn't want to watch for any reason, ever.

Mondo movies, fake snuff, goreography and horror sleaze – the boiler room is crammed with all manner of gross depravities, all of it pretty far from *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* (further still from Shelley and Stoker) and yet, like a distant blood relative, somehow related. The difference lies in the matter of degree. Violence and death – two of the great themes of all horror entertainment – are actually common ingredients of many mainstream movies, but the latter holds back on the gory details where the former revels in it. That carries over to fans of horror as well, who each draw their own limits on how gory things can get before it ceases to be about entertainment and becomes about something else.

Extreme horror movies, for their part, are not about entertainment – in fact, they are precisely about the opposite of entertainment. They aim to punish viewers, to want to make them take a shower, to make them nauseous about being a part of the human race. They live to challenge the entertainment value of horror movie audiences by "showing them what horror is really about." In other words, these movies are aimed at you (god knows nobody else would watch them unless they're wearing a customs uniform). And the challenge to you is that all the gory goodness of horror movies is actually about having fun with tragedy and tragedy is about tragedy, not about fun.

The irony, of course, is that every horror flick ever invented bills itself as the scariest most unnerving and distressing thing you'll ever see – that's what horror films are about. But you'll admit that even if *The Exorcist* traumatized you once upon a time, it was a movie that traumatized your imagination. What extreme horror movies lack is that sense of appealing to the imagination, and that's what makes them so incredibly difficult to sit through, because there's little ambiguity in an ultra-realistic display of some psycho killer's rape and murder fantasies brought to cinematic life.

Having said all that, it's important to note that effective movies are not easy to make. It actually takes talent – yup, talent – to make a film about the most abominable acts of human cruelty and actually succeed in drowning an audience on the sinking tides of despair. Many have tried and failed. Those who've succeeded, well, let's just say they succeeded.

Thankfully, horror movies (the ones we review at *Rue Morgue* at any rate), are never real, no matter how real they may seem. It's always about entertainment here, that's what interests us and makes us think (another thing we like to do). So no, not all horror fans like to watch the same stuff, we just happen to be in the same dark room. And some parts of it are darker than others.

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DESIGN BY ROB ZOMBIE & GARY PULLIN

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Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

I was just writing to thank you for the great Mario Bava retrospective in your current issue. Hail the Maestro of the Macabre! I myself have just discovered his great films and was pleased to see his name on the cover. Just one more reason why I subscribe to your magazine. I was wondering if we could get a retrospective on the diabolical films of Coffin Joe in a future issue maybe? That would be great! Until your next issue, keep those cadavers fresh and alive at the Morgue.

Mike Freeney – Chincoteague, Virginia

Thank you for your coverage on The Misfits in your last issue (#30). It's about time that this legendary band got the acknowledgement they deserve. They are truly the best horror punk band of all time, and they deserve credit where credit is due. It's only fitting that the best horror punk band ever be featured in the greatest horror magazine ever! Thanks again!

Jesse Striewski – Naples, Florida

As a fairly recent subscriber, I would just like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your high level of customer service; previous to subscribing, my inquiries were answered quickly and courteously. I have just received the latest issue today, and last week I was surprised to find a beautiful mini-poster of the classic Lugosi *Dracula* amongst my mail! Thank you very much. In regards to the latest issue, the feature article on Mario Bava was great. It's good to see you covering the classics as well as newer films. And Mr. Gudino's article concerning the topic of celebrities really hit the nail on the head, and made me realize why *Rue Morgue* is the most respected horror genre periodical.

Mark Rybka – Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

Add my name to the growing list of US citizens who have just discovered your excellent magazine. I don't know how I missed it all these years, but I'm hooked. Excellent production quality (I second an opinion someone else made: even the ads are fun to read) and I applaud your no-celebs-on-the-cover editorial stance.

Greg Lamberson – New York City

I have been overseas stationed in Italy with the US Army for the last four years, and the selection of good horror mags was very limited. So one day in frustration to find a magazine with a little more spunk, I searched the Net and found *Rue Morgue*. I was instantly impressed and wanted to see more. I ordered a subscription and had them sent to my home in the States knowing I will be back there soon. When I arrived home and found the first three

issues waiting for me, I was like a kid on Christmas, full of excitement and awe! The magazine had everything I could imagine and more, so many great articles, and lots of advertisements all having to do with the genre. I am horrible with this kind of stuff (writing letters), but what I am trying to say is thank you for the greatest horror magazine on the planet or our realm of existence. Your newest and totally loyal fan for life....

Jason Farone – Chicora, Pennsylvania

I just finished reading your review of *Alucarda* a.k.a. *Innocents From Hell* (Gore-met, RM#29) and at the bottom of the review you mentioned rumours of a possible DVD release. In case you didn't know, this film is already available on DVD from Mondo Macabro in the UK. It's PAL but it's region free and you can get it from pretty much any UK online retailer. I've had it for a couple of weeks now and it looks pretty good on DVD. It's full screen and mono but it's got vibrant colours. Anyway, just thought you'd like to know.

Nick Florio – Middleburg, FL

As much of a fan of H.P. Lovecraft that I am, I am certainly NOT a fan of Stuart Gordon and Dennis Paoli! I recently rented *Dagon*, which I learned about through *Rue Morgue* #28. (Thank God I only rented!) I was excited at first – I had never seen a movie based on any Lovecraft material. Needless to say, after watching the movie in its entirety, I felt disgusted and frankly insulted that Lovecraft's name even appears above the title! I recall that it was you at *Rue Morgue* who said "Gordon, like Lovecraft has an understanding of what horror is and how it functions." True, Lovecraft does, he mastered it; Gordon on the other hand does NOT. My biggest regret is that somewhere some Hollywood big wig is going to see this piece of cinematic, z-grade, shit and associate its overwhelming number of flaws and stupidity with Lovecraft, hence dooming any chance of a decent and real interpretation of Lovecraft's work on the big screen. We'll probably have to wait another 50 or 60 years if Stuart Gordon isn't stopped.

Sean Kasper – Roslindale, Massachusetts

You are the only magazine that talks the talk and walks the walk. You not only give all of us horror aficionados the newest information about DVD reissues, upcoming movies in production and spotlights on great talent, but you also teach. You give both the young and older horror crowd information on the greats in this genre and you constantly keep me on my toes. I have never had more information about something that I love than I do now with your

magazine. I thank you from the bottom of my crooked soul for creating something that has set a new standard in horror.

Christina Crowther – Stillwater, Minnesota

In my close to 20 years of collecting, this is the very first horror related mag I felt I had to subscribe to. *Rue Morgue* is what I have always wanted other mags to be, and it's probably the only mag I read cover to cover whether I am interested in the subject of the article or not. I recently had the opportunity to spend some time with some Rue-Reps at the Chiller Theatre Con a couple of weeks ago, and picked up some back issues and chatted about for a bit. After talking with them and spending some time there, I have even more respect for the Rue-Staff. Not a pretentious person in the booth, and eager to talk to the readers and find out what they think. I think I was asked four or five times if I have had any problems with my subscription (which I have not), and I found that to be a true sign that you care about your readers.

Chris Isenberg – Baltimore, Maryland

Your recent Halloween special with Vincent Price was godly! He is by far my all-time favourite celluloid screen actor – all of these Midnight special DVDs coming out are great fun. DVDs have really opened up a whole new generation to horror that may otherwise never have been seen due to the limitations of VHS.

John Verica – Sewell, New Jersey

I was just flipping through the latest issue of *Rue Morgue*, when I noticed that my fingerprints showed up in the light on the black glossy paper inside. I mean, I'm sure that this is no great discovery or anything, but it does look cool. Like the remnants of the dead or something. Anyway, it's just cool, and that's about it.

Flat Rat – Mt. Pleasant, North Carolina

Retraction

In our last issue, we mistakenly reported that the *Brotherhood of the Wolf* Collector's Edition DVD was available in the United States. In fact, it is only available in Canada. *Rue Morgue* regrets the error.

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to info@rue-morgue.com or:

POST MORTEM
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CANADA



DreadLines

News Highlights



Horror Happenings

New Line wraps on *Freddy Vs. Jason*



Rumour becomes reality as *Freddy Vs. Jason* moves into post-production!

After years of rumours, false starts, rejected scripts and numerous directors, *Freddy Vs. Jason* is finally a reality, as principal photography on the \$35 million film came to a close on Nov 22 in rural Vancouver, British Columbia. Freddy Krueger and Jason Voorhees spent the two-and-a-half month shooting schedule reigning terror over one of Canada's most scenic provinces and, according to director Ronny (Bride of Chucky) Yu, the fight was a spectacular success. What everyone really wants to know, however, was how the film's producers

decided to finally bring two of the genre's most popular franchises into one coherent story. According to Yu, it was easier than it looked. (Warning: spoilers ahead!)

"Jason is a very reality based character while Freddy exists in a mystical world," he explains. "Freddy tricks Jason into helping to free his soul, using Jason's mother as a lure. When Jason finds out that he's been tricked, he's determined to destroy Freddy. It's personal: you don't mess with Jason's mother. Basically, the game is: when Jason gets into Freddy's nightmare world, Freddy

can dominate, but when Freddy's in Jason's reality world, here on earth, there's no protection for him and Jason can kick his ass."

Freddy Vs. Jason opens at Camp Crystal Lake, where Jason rises from his underground grave, only to be confronted by the ghost of a weakened Freddy, who, while pretending to be Jason's mother, strikes the Faustian bargain with Camp Crystal Lake's most infamous resident. The film received its first big publicity boost when longtime Jason actor Kane Hodder was replaced in favour of Vancouver-based stuntman Ken Kirzinger, who joins a cast that includes newcomers Jason Ritter, Monica Keena, Destiny's Child singer Kelly Rowland and, of course, Freddy himself, Robert Englund. Effects for the film were handled by Bill Terezakis and his Vancouver-based company, WTC Productions.

"We've got lots of Freddy and Jason backstory in this film," asserts Englund, whose performance marks his eighth appearance inside Freddy's trademark hat and knife-shaped glove (his first since 1994's *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*). "We learn the mythology of these characters, Greek kind of shit. What their dreams are like and what makes them tick. We've also got lots of flashbacks in the film, Jason flashbacks, kid Jason. This is before Kevin Bacon got the arrow in the throat. As far as Freddy, I've always found the possibility of going back into his history really interesting. You had all of these parents who went after him, like Heather's (Langenkamp) parents from the first film. The metaphor we're using in this film is that the modern teenagers, they're

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drugged out on Prozac and they don't know Freddy and Freddy can't get into their heads. That's where Freddy needs Jason's help. He needs the teenagers to start having nightmares again."

At six-foot-five, 225 pounds, Kirzinger looks more than able to fill Jason's hockey mask.

"Jason's a crazed mama's boy," Kirzinger says with a laugh. "I think the audience is going to sympathize with him in this film. Freddy's just a killer, he chose that life, but Jason, he was a victim himself, and he loves his mother very much."

For Kirzinger, the biggest challenge in bringing the role to life was trying to show a range of emotions while wearing Jason's trademark hockey mask.

"You're not going to see a tear falling down his mask, nothing like that," says the actor, who has a close friendship with Hodder in real life. "No, we're going to show Jason's spectrum with head movements, a certain kind of walking, his actions. This whole film is about Freddy and Jason; the teenagers kind of exist to facilitate that relationship, until Jason can get his hands on Freddy. For Jason, killing teenagers is just business, but with Freddy, it's gotten damn personal."

With two horror vanguards sharing top billing, the makers of *Freddy Vs. Jason* are reluctant to say who gets the better of who in the end. But Yu says there are definitely plans to make more.

"I think the *Elm Street* and *Friday the 13th* films are played out," he reveals. "That's how New Line felt. They want this to be the new franchise. We've shot a great triple ending, very Hitchcockian and atmospheric. One of the reasons the guys at New Line liked me was that I didn't know anything about the previous *Elm Street* or *Friday* films. They wanted someone fresh and new. I see *Freddy Vs. Jason* not as a sequel, but as a new beginning."

David Grove



Sony brings giant monsters to PS2

The concept of giant monsters duking it out and laying waste to the earth's cities is admittedly more given to games than movies, but it's made for great cinema, so why not great games too? Sony's betting that's going to be the case with the January 14 release of *War of the Monsters* for PlayStation2, a game inspired by classic sci-fi and giant monster movies of the '50s and '60s.

Developed by the folks behind the critically acclaimed *Twisted Metal: Black*, *War of the Monsters* pits goliath beasts in raging battle on planet Earth as they clash with opponents in thriving cities, run rampant through bustling streets, clobber each other with body slams and fight off military defenses. All the staples of the giant monster movies are here; karate kicks and slaps, grappling, hand-to-hand

weapons, destructive special attacks, and environmental disasters the likes of tidal waves and earthquakes. As the monsters in the ongoing battles, players will be able to topple buildings onto one another, lob tanker trucks like rocks and use hunks of debris for shields in their fight to gain domination and bring catastrophe to urban centres.

Sony's expecting that ten different creatures, twelve destructible environments, numerous weapons (steel girders, radio antenna, moving vehicles, building rubble, army tanks) and suitably epic musical scores for each fight (one on one or a four-monster battle royale) is going to keep you entertained. Rampaging monster fans, you've been notified....

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www.thehma.net

Having trouble finding a Jason mask that does the trick or treat? Then grab your butcher knife and head on over to the *Halloween Mask Association* to brainstorm with other Jason wannabes. Find message boards, collectors gallery and links to one-of-a-kind Halloween mask-makers!

www.horror-wood.com

Winner of numerous dubious and official Web awards, the e-zine *Horrorwood* harkens back to the good ol' days when monsters kept their innards intact. Well-written, interesting and really funny – what the hell – we'd give them an award too!

www.inflictionfilms.com/html/links.htm

Click on "Electric Festivals" for extensive listings of dark film fests around the world, brought to you by FantAsia's own Mitch Davis. While you're passing through, check into the main site to learn more about Davis' own trauma-inducing creations.

www.meridian-music.com

Admittedly this is a shameless plug for *Rue Morgue* scribe Chris Alexander, who double-times as a musician. His site features his own Frizzi-Morricone-John Carpenter-influenced band *Annihilator* along with the like-minded band *Zombi*, as well as Chris' delectably mad musings.

www.toyghoul.com

"I'm always makin' and paintin' monsters," says artist Chad Scheres, and he ain't kidding. From horror toy models to mailboxes and toilet seats, the creepy world is Chad's canvas.

<http://boxofmonsters.com>

Billed as the site that "glows in the dark," *Box of Monsters* is a fandom treasure trove. Links abound in tribute to old Aurora Monster Kits, monster masks and the "gory" days of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. There's even a petition to make an Uncle Furry action figure! Be a kid again.

-compiled by Mary-Beth Hollyer

Got a website suggestion?

E-mail a link to: mbh@rue-morgue.com



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Kustom Kulture - Kreepy Kustoms - Kasket Cuties

Spring release for The House of the Dead

Zombies seem like the perfect type of monster on which to base a horror film and indeed, films like *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* are considered to be two of the greatest horror films in history, but when you stop and think about it, it's hard to find fresh things to do with zombies. They're slow, they don't talk and they die easily. It seems like everything that you could possibly do with zombies has been done, so what's left?

This was the very challenge that inspired the makers of the new zombie epic *The House of the Dead* to create a new breed of zombies who are more bloodthirsty and full of kinetic energy than their film counterparts. The \$12 million film which is based on the popular SEGA video game of the same name was directed by Uwe Boll (*Sanctimony*) and scripted by Dave Parker and Mark Altman (*The Specials*), who also produced the film through his Mindfire Entertainment banner. Jurgen Prochnow (*The Seventh Sign*), Clint Howard, Ellie Cornell (*Halloween 4*) and Jonathan Cherry (*Final Destination 2*) top line a youth-dominated cast.

"I've always loved zombie movies like the Romero trilogy, *Return of the Living Dead*, and my favourite, Val Lewton's *I Walked With a Zombie*," says Altman, who helped secure the big screen rights to the popular video game series after the project went into turnaround at DreamWorks – DW originally intended to make a \$45 million film of the game. "When a friend told me the project was available, I was very hesitant even though I thought the game itself was very cinematic. Video game movies are always terrible, so I knew the only way to make a film was to be respectful to both the zombie genre and the spirit of the video game. This film was made by horror and zombie fans who know what the fans want to see."

Director Boll, whose previous films have been in the direct-to-video thriller genre,



Zombies get an upgrade in *House of the Dead*.

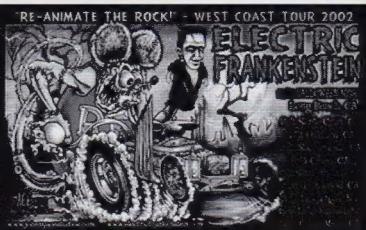
echoes Altman's enthusiasm.

"My goal was to make a very dry, very atmospheric and bloody zombie movie," he says. "Nobody can bring a video game exactly to life, but that's what we've tried to do. Whereas in the game, you have a shooter running around non-stop, blowing zombies to bits, here we have ninety minutes of young people who are being savagely attacked on a remote island. The action is just like that in the game. In fact, SEGA has expressed interest in using the script for our film as the basis for their next *House of the Dead* video game sequel."

The House of the Dead tells the story of a group of college co-eds who, during Spring break, decide to take a trip on a party boat to an isolated island in the Florida Keys where a big Halloween rave is supposedly taking place. When the mysterious Captain Kirk (Prochnow) drops them on the island, however, they find it completely deserted. Shortly thereafter they run into an army of flesh-eating zombies and hole themselves up in a spooky house which provides little haven from the growing zombie horde.

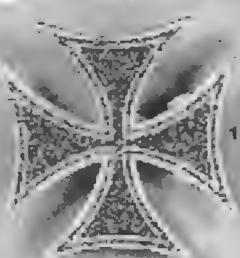
Altman and his company, Mindfire Entertainment, have also obtained the rights to the games *Crazy Taxi* and *Dead or Alive*, and the producer revealed that he'd also like to set his sights on a film adaptation of *Vampirella*, the 1970s comic book. *The House of the Dead* is set for a Spring 2003 release.

David Grove

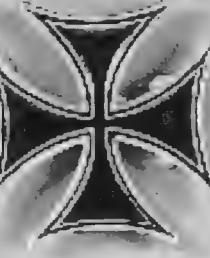


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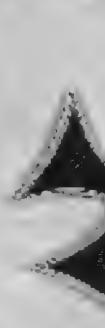
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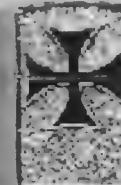


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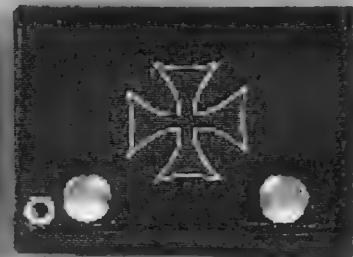
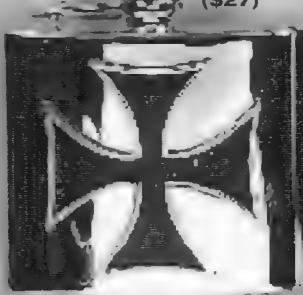


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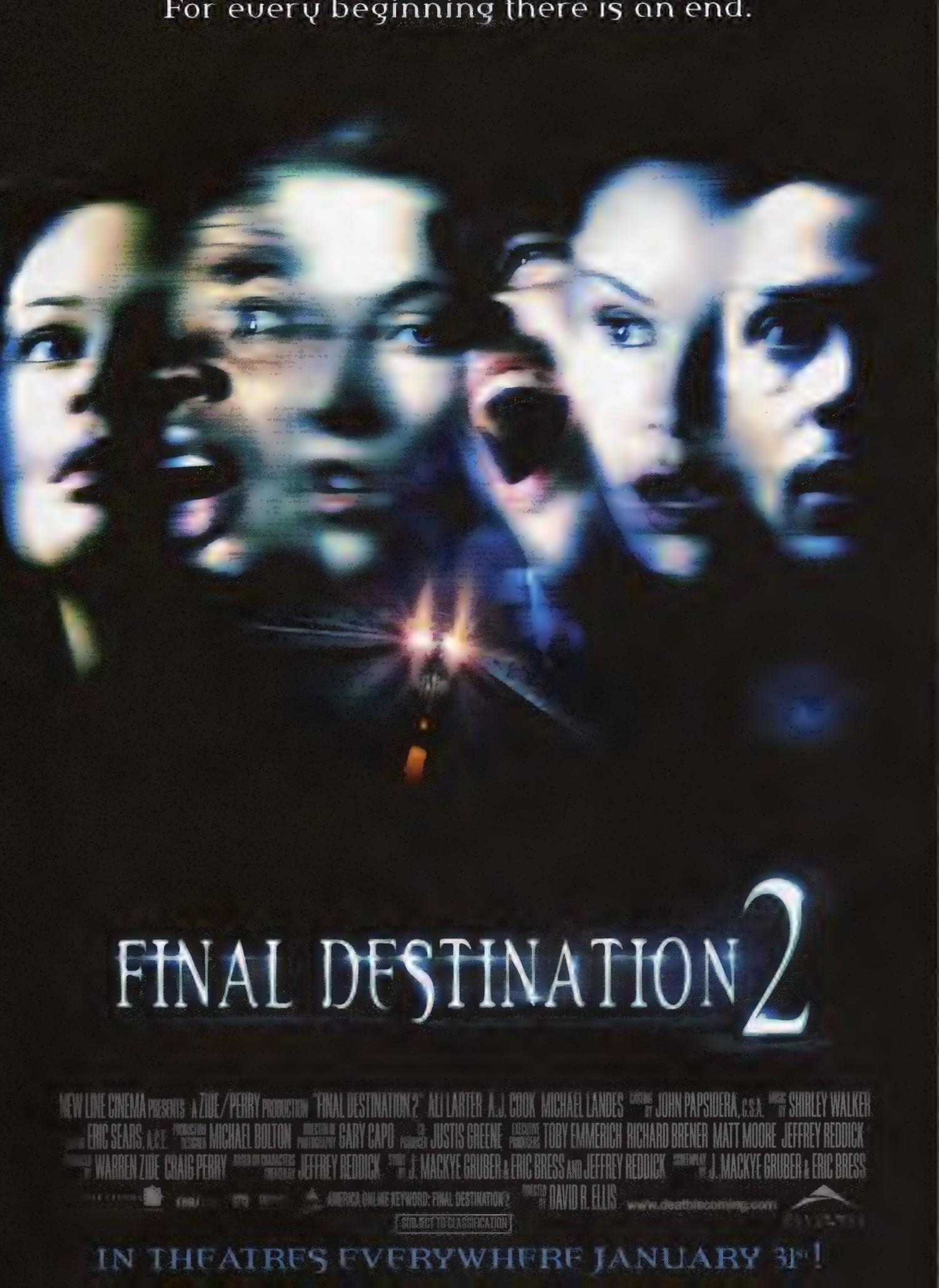
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For the past

two years.

ROB ZOMBIE

has been fighting

to get his

director's debut:

HOUSE OF 1000 CORPSES

released so you can

see it. This March,

he'll finally succeed.

Here's what you can

expect... from

everyone involved.

BY ROD GUDING

You'd think a man of the commercial stature of Rob Zombie would have a relatively easy time making a movie in Hollywood. Think again. If Zombie's opening gambit in Tinseltown proves anything, it's that having a recognizable name counts for little when you're up against the moral majority. You read that right; only an eternal optimist would believe that there is still any morality left in Hollywood; only a fool would think that the semblance of morality doesn't still reign supreme.

Nothing else could rightly explain why Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses*, a period piece homage to the reddest splatter movies of the 1970s starring Karen (*Trilogy of Terror*) Black, Sid (*Spider Baby*) Haig and Bill (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*) Moseley, ran into problems virtually from the get-go (see RM#24). Gruesome and extreme, *House of 1000 Corpses* may have been given the green light by Universal Studios, but it has since left those hallowed halls to be bandied about from contract to stillborn contract, largely because it was modelled after movies that were made before the term "politically correct" was invented.

Wholly due to Zombie's continued efforts, it was announced last year that *House* had finally found a home at Lions Gate Entertainment. The movie nobody wanted to release will finally hit the theatres this March. And surprise, half of it won't be lying on the cutting room floor, so says

Zombie in the exclusive interview that follows. And even though it has taken over two years to release, *House of 1000 Corpses* may be the movie you've been waiting to see since that vibrant and violent period in filmmaking, the 1970s, came to a close....

First of all, congratulations on finally getting the movie done and ready to go out.

I know, it's crazy.

It's been – what – two years since you shot it?

I kind of forgot. I know that this coming January will be three years since I finished writing the script.

I understand you got an R rating. Did you have to cut a lot out?

We had to trim scenes but actually, at the end of the day, it didn't turn out to be as bad as I originally expected. There were certain scenes that I knew we would have to trim, just like anybody would, and I was fine with that but there were other ones that I just definitely didn't want to lose and I was afraid I'd have to lose the whole scene or something, but it didn't happen. I'm pretty happy with the R-rated version; I don't really feel like it damaged the movie in any way.

So how much did you end up cutting out then? Was it a matter of ten minutes or less or more?

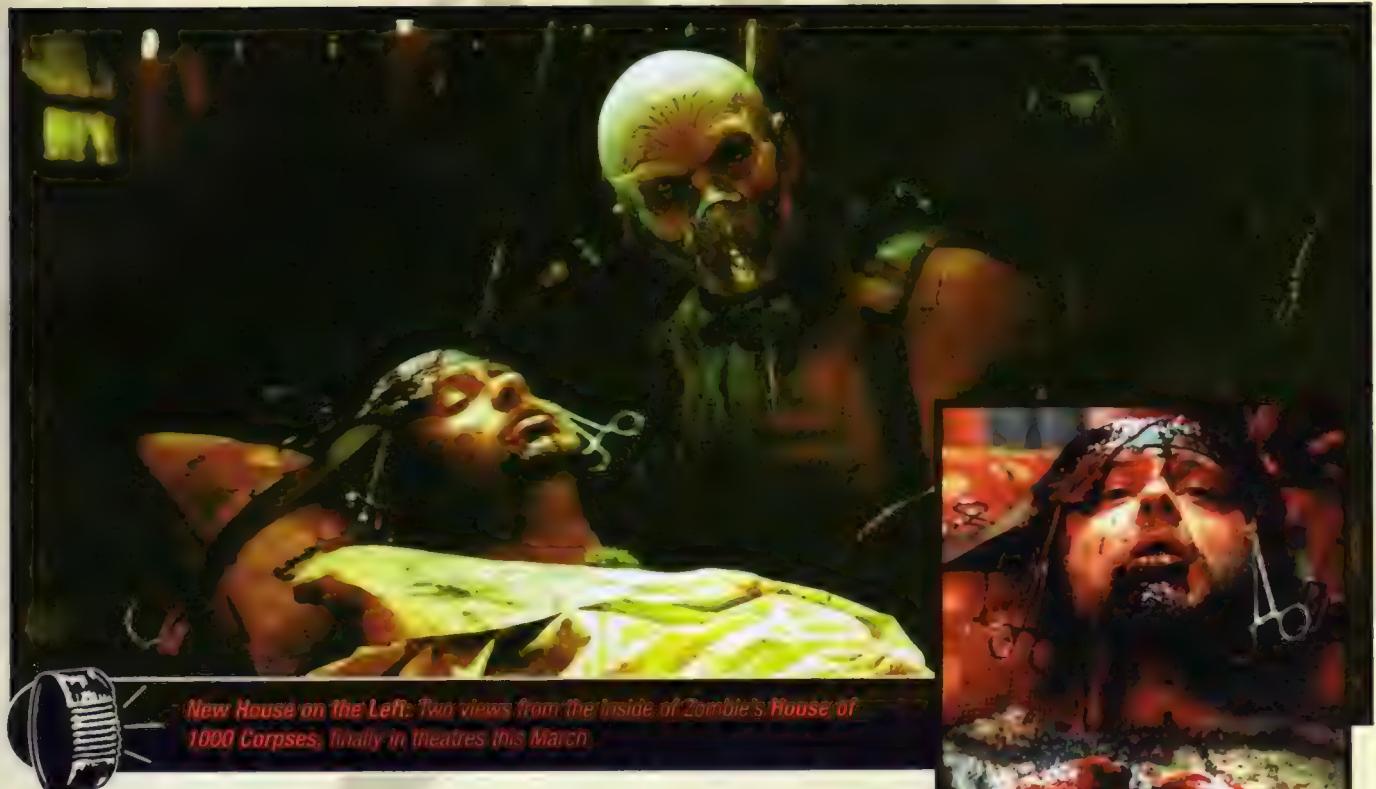
It was less than that. For example, there's a stabbing scene where someone gets stabbed five times, now they get stabbed three times. It's more like trimming things that are still in the movie with no big chunks of anything actually cut out.

I imagine when this gets to DVD there'll be a director's cut?

It's kind of weird with that, I mean, I guess we'll definitely have some sort of unrated cut but as it stands I feel this is the director's cut too. It wasn't really cut due to anyone else's orders other than the same MPAA thing that affects every single person in the movie business. I don't think it ruined the movie in any way, even though there was a point where it seemed like it might.

You wrote the movie three years ago, you shot it two years ago and you had a very long editing process. Did your vision of what the movie is about change significantly over that time?

At this point it hasn't changed at all. If I go back to square one, the part that got messed around with the most was in the initial phase when the movie was at Universal Studios. That was when



New House on the Left: Two views from the inside of zombie's House of 1000 Corpses, finally in theatres this March



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**"NOT ONLY IS THE MOVIE SET IN 1977,
I SORT OF ALMOST WANTED IT TO
LOOK LIKE IT WAS FILMED IN 1977"**

ROB ZOMBIE



we were shooting and people could get involved, but after that, no one's been involved.

Were you on your own for pretty much the whole thing?

No, not at all. That's the sort of weird impression that comes across – that I ran off and did some weird thing and Universal saw it later and freaked out – whereas the reality is that at least half the movie is shot on the Universal backlot. So at any given moment, we were a hundred yards away from their main offices. They saw all the dailies, they read the script obviously and they had about a million meetings, so it was not really like that. I don't know if it was just that they were paying attention but not paying attention or that they just couldn't visualize the final product – I don't know what it was – but I certainly didn't have the luxury of running off and doing whatever I wanted wherever I wanted and bringing in the finished thing later.

If you were to do it again, would you do it the same way or would you rather do an independent movie?

Either way it's tough. The less outside interference, the better, so that's the way I would like to do it. If that's an independent movie then that's what it is, if it's a studio picture then it's a studio picture. The other terms don't really matter, it's just how much people are going to get in the way of what you're trying to do. Sometimes people would have suggestions and they were helpful, but most of the time they just... didn't, which is why most movies seem so generic when you finally see them – too many people with too many opinions just water down the end product.

I have to ask, what exactly happened with MGM? Was that a bogus press release they sent out or was it the true story?

I don't know what people are saying exactly, but I'll tell you the true story. We were finishing the movie, editing the movie and MGM was paying the bills – it was going to be an MGM movie, clearly. And I was doing this thing for MTV, they have this show called *Movie House*, and I was interviewing Ben Affleck on the set of *Daredevil*.

ii. And we were talking – I don't know if this was on camera or off camera, I think someone just overheard it – and he says "what happened with Universal?" I said "oh, you know, they thought the movie was morally corrupt and they didn't want to put it out." And he was like, "I heard that MGM is putting it out, what do they think?" And I said, "oh, I guess they have no morals," as a joke, not thinking that anyone other than Ben Affleck was hearing this joke. But somebody heard it and they put it on the MTV website and it sat there and then *Variety* wrote an article about MGM picking up the film and they took that quote off the MTV website. It was on, like, page two of *Variety* and that was when the shit hit the fan and everyone at MGM freaked out and that was the end of that. But that's exactly what happened, as completely ridiculous as that is, it's the truth. MGM was like "oh, we were never going to put the movie out." Well, they were paying the bills! I guess they just wanted to give me free money to work on my movie for no apparent reason! It's just completely ridiculous.

And yet, in the future when you make movies do you still want to deal with these people? It's like anything else, it depends what you're trying to do. The thing is, once you have some success behind you, you get the freedom. But, you know, if you make independent pictures,



Bloodshow Extraordinaire: There are some moments that are kinda bloody and disgusting, but that wasn't my only purpose in making it. says Zombie.

you can't reach as many people as you can with those studio pictures; but then you give up a certain something maybe. It's all give and take, like anything else, you just have to take it on a case by case basis. These days, what is kind of good is that with DVDs and satellite and everything you can, eventually, give your film exposure, it's not like the old days where the real version of a movie would just disappear. You get it out there to people so it's not so bad.

What kind of horror movie is House of 1000 Corpses?

There's a certain time period that I loved as a kid in the '70s, and there are certain films I just loved. And it was almost sort of like trying to recapture that feeling – the first time I saw *Chainsaw Massacre* or the first time I saw *Rocky Horror* or the first time I saw *Dawn of the Dead* – there's just a feeling those films have that's hard to find now and it was sort of *that* I was going for. I wasn't trying to make it overly gross for no real reason, but one thing that those movies all have is that they were really character driven movies, especially *Chainsaw Massacre*. What makes that movie great is not that there's a guy with a chainsaw killing people, but that the different characters in the family are so great.

You're talking about the evil characters of those films.

Yes, the evil characters were the well-written

characters that dominated the movie. Whereas they began a trend in the '80s where the villain was always some faceless guy with a knife or a guy saying bad one liners. So really, I was just trying to bring it back where the villains and the evil people were the stars and that's who you care about and that's what it's all about. They're the ones who carry the picture, they're not a footnote to something else. Yes, there are some moments that are funny on *House*, but it's not meant to be a comedy. And yes there are some moments that are kinda bloody and disgusting, but that wasn't my only purpose in making it by any means, because there are already so many movies that are so incredibly bloody and disgusting that you could never top that – it's just a useless goal. You look at something like *Make Them Die Slowly* or *Cannibal Holocaust*, that's already taking it to such a degree that you can never match because no one would ever give you money to make a film like that in a million years.

Unless you go to Japan and you're making The Untold Story or something like that.

Yeah, but in this country it would be a waste of time, unless your goal is to make a movie that no one would ever see.

Last time we spoke, you mentioned that you incorporated some of your own music into the movie. How did you end up scoring House of 1000 Corpses in the end?

In the opening and end credits there is some of my music, but within the body of the film – since the film is set in the '70s – I kept the music specific to that time period. So if there is any music playing, it's from that time and the score is sort of like not an orchestral score because that sounded too grand. It needed to be something more junky sounding, more lo-fi.

Is it fair to say that House is a period piece?

Yeah I guess it is. 1977 is the time that the movie takes place in and I thought there was something about that time – all the films I love are sort of frozen in that time period.

What kind of approach did you take for the film's effects? Were you riffing off of the '70s films as well?

What I wanted to do was old-school effects, because that's the other thing I'm bored with – digital effects are just, I don't know, too over-the-top or something. Also, I wanted to remain true to the time period. Not only is the movie set in 1977, I sort of almost wanted it to look like it was filmed in 1977. If someone showed it to you and told you, "I found this movie in a vault," you'd go like, "oh, wow."

You'd have to use bleached film stock!

Actually, at one point I investigated doing that but it just didn't look right. You just won't see a *Matrix*-type special effect happen in the middle of it – I wanted to keep it kind of lo-fi. Not poor-

THE VOLUPTUOUS HORROR



Black in a rare outtake from *Trilogy of Terror* and (below) as the matriarch of the Firefly clan

"Mother Firefly is an okie," says Karen Black, "you know, one of those women who probably has black teeth and who's been around. I've got long, blonde hair and I'm walking around in lingerie, with very little on, frankly — my whole leg is showing. It's interesting to be an okie nymphomaniac because you get to be really sexy."

For Black, being sexy is old hat, having introduced a singular voluptuousness that became all but a trademark in genre pictures. Even so, Black's best known horror roles date back three decades, a deliberate decision on her behalf since she has publicly declared that she would not work in the genre ever again. *House of 1000 Corpses*, she says, was the exception.

"When they first sent me the script, I put it aside, because I opened it up at random and there was some murder — it was a little bit gory or something," she says. "And I said, 'well, I'm not doing those movies anymore, I don't want to do those films, it's over.' And then I went to the Academy Awards and I wore this fabulous gown which was sea blue and it looked great. And Rob saw me struttin' around the red carpet, you know, and he told my agent, 'I'm gonna change

her character into a nymphomaniac.' And once I heard that, I said, 'okay, I'm going to do that part!'

Black also says she accepted the role for other reasons as well, notably because she can recognize a good script when she sees one. But the legendary actor also allows that she is more comfortable now with her legacy in horror than she has been in the past.

"I think that the whole thing that happened with me and scary movies — and they were not all horror because I did *Invaders From Mars* and so forth, you know, science fiction movies — is that I really don't like blood; I think it's kind of boring, it doesn't intrigue me," she says. "I would have probably not taken that path, it just happened in the '70s as an odd circumstance. I was offered a television movie which was really good and I just didn't pay attention and I signed on to it. And at the same time Dan Curtis offered me *Trilogy of Terror* and I didn't really want to take it at first. The only thing that interested me about *Trilogy of Terror* at that time is one of the characters — if you remember — was a spinster and she wore no makeup and she was sort of like an elderly person even though I was twenty at the time. And I thought I'd have to wait till I was forty to get that character, so maybe I should play it now. So that started me on that path, but it was circumstantial, and then Dan came back with *Burnt Offerings*. But really I think I've made one hundred and thirty movies and only fourteen of them are that genre, so it's really not such a big deal. That's not really my path, but I took it so I have to be responsible about that."

The matriarch to the backwoods clan, Black describes Mother Firefly as being utterly loyal to her murdering family. A gang of lunatic psychotics to most, but to Mother, her three sons and beautiful daughter Baby

(Sheri Moon) can do no wrong.

"I don't think you better call my family psycho, no sirree," she says, effortlessly slipping into character. "They're the only sane ones in the place — those other people are the crazy ones. It's very important that you understand that, or I may have my way with you."

A veteran of the film industry, Black has worked alongside the industry's top talent: Alfred Hitchcock, Dan Curtis and Francis Ford Coppola to name but three. Even so, her praise for first-time director Rob Zombie is significant.

"Rob is a big surprise, he's a big present for Hollywood," she says emphatically. "I mean, nobody knows that he's great, he's *really* great. He was so soft-spoken and he did this thing which is a great boon to talent; he really enjoyed what we did. I mean he'd walk in laughing and smiling after a scene and he'd say 'that was awesome!' — he always used that word, 'awesome.' He always made you feel like you were really entertaining. I'll tell you what's interesting about Rob; he's a very shy person. He's sort of the opposite of his music, he's really a shy guy. He's real soft-spoken and as a woman that makes you feel like hugging him, you feel like he's cuddly or something."

— Rod Gudino



KAREN BLACK IS
MOTHER FIREFLY





Freaks...
Star Wars
Babes and the Empire is
Graffiti High

ly done, but simple, old-school sort of effects, makeup and that kind of stuff. *The Exorcist* is all effects that had to be done in the room as it was happening, that type of stuff – nothing was added in later digitally or faked. Something about it actually existing in real space makes it creepier than staring at some sort of digital masterpiece.

It's funny because I think the human eye can still discern the difference, which is why I can barely watch the new Star Wars movies. I can barely stand that shit. There's something about when they used to have to build a thirty-foot spaceship and film it. It actually exists in real life. Now it's like watching a cartoon – a super realistic cartoon – but still like a cartoon. And I just didn't want to do anything like that. It didn't make sense with this movie.

You've often said that a lot of modern horror films are a waste of time. Have you seen anything recently that may have changed that opinion?

actually thought the *Ring* remake was well done. I saw the original, which I liked, and I totally expected the slick American version to be horrible. I liked the fact that it took itself seri-

ously and that was kind of refreshing for once.

That was the general consensus at the magazine as well: we expected it to be bad, but actually ended up liking it.

It's almost like it's hard to admit it to yourself. I so fully expected it to be horrible that it was like "oh my god, it's actually really good!"

Do you take the time to watch international horror films to any degree?

The last non-US film that I saw that I thought was really good was *Auditor* [Ondišon]. I thought that was a pretty amazing film.

It seems like we're in the midst of a resurgence of Japanese movies. Well, they're always pretty damn good, especially when it comes to horror. They have such a different way that they see things. All the horror movies over here always become like *Halloween H20* or something worse, grinding out the same formula. It seems that every Japanese movie breaks every formula.

Do you still want to make movies?

Oh yeah, that's all I really want to do, that's the reason I didn't give up on this. I mean, at any moment this film should have probably been given up on, because the outlook was so bleak but I was determined to save it from being shelved or locked in a vault or dumped direct to video. I felt that we put so much time and effort into it. It's a film that should be seen.

Will you be making more horror movies?
I don't know if that's the next thing it would be but that's not all I want to do by any means.

Do you expect the mainstream to respond to your movie or do you expect it to be for horror fans only?

Who knows, you know. It's just so weird, it's so unpredictable. If you look at a movie like *Jackass*, all you see is guys with a camcorder hurling themselves, but then it's this huge movie! You just never know.

Would you consider doing a sequel?

I would do a sequel because I kind of wrote it in such a way that it could handle a sequel, just in case. I didn't want it to be the movie that completely has a story that ends and then they want a sequel and it makes no sense to have a sequel because you just killed off a character and you have to bring him back in such a way that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20...

THE FAMILY THAT SLAYS TOGETHER, STAYS TOGETHER



Captain Spaulding is the epitome of the American spirit," notes Sid Haig, "which means if you're gonna fuck with him, you better bring all your shit! Is he insane? Yes he is, but he's really a lot like I am because he doesn't take a lot of crap. And if he needs to get into somebody's face, there's absolutely no fear. That's the way he lives his life; he doesn't take anything from anybody."

True words have never been spoken by a man who has fearlessly followed his muse wherever it's led him. And, thankfully it's led him in some pretty offbeat directions. Haig's career in the cinema of strange is nothing short of outstanding. Among his extensive credits he counts roles in George Lucas' sci-fi debut *THX 1138*, Jack Hill's classic women-in-prison flick *The Bird Cage*, Eddie Romero's *Savage Sisters* and let's not forget *Galaxy of Terrors*, along with a slew of television credits throughout the '60s in shows like *Batman*, *Gunsmoke*, *Mission: Impossible* and a ton of others.

Certainly no horror fan can overlook his singular performance as the whacked-out Ralph in Hill's *Spider Baby* (1964), a bizarre masterpiece that holds the distinction of being the only movie to ever be considered a precursor to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Haig's appearance in that film was unquestionably one of the reasons Rob Zombie saw fit to cast the 63-year-old actor in his *House of 1000 Corpses*, the latest successor to the movie pioneered by Hill all those years ago. But Haig admits that he was drawn to the project for his own reasons.

"I think there's a certain part of me that will always gravitate to the really bizarre," he allows, and when he's questioned about Captain Spaulding in particular, he laughs and says, "I always work from insanity! It's just one of those things where you take the work that you have to do and you say, okay, how am I going to do this? A lot of times, you just drop your pants and go for it and commit yourself totally to what you're doing. If it's insanity, fine. It's insanity, call in the psychs and see if you're crazy."

A soft-spoken man with a quiet ease about him, Haig says that his disenchantment with Hollywood caused him to leave the business on more than one occasion, but that he was coaxed out of retirement by filmmakers he believed in, such as Quentin Tarantino (who sought Haig out for roles in *Jackie Brown* and his upcoming *Kill Bill*) and, of course, Rob Zombie.

"I think at some point in time Rob's going to be a huge filmmaker because he gets it," he says. "He understands that you have a concept as the playwright, director whatever, and you communicate that idea as strongly as you can to the people that you're working with and you let them do their job. And that's what he does. I was never confused as to where he wanted me to go with anything and I had confidence in him to know that if I was going in a direction that he didn't like, he would let me know. I think this is just the tip of the iceberg for him."

Haig's appearance in *House of 1000 Corpses* will undoubtedly cast some attention back on *Spider Baby*, which the actor starred in when he was just eighteen-years-old. The movie enjoyed a belated surge of popularity beginning in the early nineties, and was eventually reissued in a definitive DVD by Image Entertainment.

"That movie is so weird and bizarre that the time was right for it to happen," muses Haig about the film's new-found popularity. "It never really had an audience before and now it does. I think it's bizarre enough and strange enough that people just connected to it."

Spider Baby tells the story of the Merryses, a backwoods family who suffer from a degenerative condition which makes them kill the visitors who drop by their dilapidated rural mansion. The film starred Mary (Dementia 13) Mitchel and Lon Chaney Jr. as Bruno the chauffeur in what was undoubtedly one of the late actors' most unusual outings.

"I remember him as a really nice, cooperative, kind, funny guy who was always there to help out," recalls Haig. "He wasn't standoffish at all."



He didn't play any kind of star role or anything like that; he was really very the puf! and encouraging, it was an absolutely wonderful experience for me, 'cause as a kid I grew up watching all of his films and then there I was with him in front of the camera lenses – it was a total trip."

Shot for pocket change in just eleven days, *Spider Baby* stands as a testament to the ingenuity of director Hill and his crew, who had to find innovative ways of achieving their effect without the aid of a budget.

"We didn't have any power at the location," says Haig, "and [cinematographer] Al Taylor – the guy's a genius – used six shiny boards to bounce light from the front yard of the house, down the hall through the living room and back out the window to light Manhattan Moreland when he gets killed at the beginning of the movie. I was impressed."

With a family of psychopaths, a good body count and freaks-a-plenty, Haig agrees that *Spider Baby* shares a certain twisted kind of with *House of 1000 Corpses*.

"It's the double album, I'm telling you!" he laughs. "It's the bizarre night of film! That double

header would go on for months, because they play into one another's strangeness. That would be an incredible hook up: those two films."

Emma Anderson



**SID HAIG IS
CAPTAIN SPAULDING**



LIFE IS A MASSACRE



"Otis is a skinny albino artist with an artist's block," says Bill Moseley. "And when two young couples lose their way and wind up at the House of 1000 Corpses, that fires me up and I start feeling those old creative juices again!"

For Moseley, those creative juices have a habit of expressing themselves in a way detrimental to civilized society. No surprise that the 45-year-old actor is best known for his portrayal of the maniacal Chop Top in Tobe Hooper's 1986 sequel to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. That role inevitably was a huge reason why Moseley ended up playing a whacked-out albino artist with a penchant for hurting innocent folk in Rob Zombie's throwback splatter extravaganza.

"You really have to humanize psychos, otherwise it's very easy for these characters to just become kind of cartoonish and then you lose any audience empathy," says Moseley of his secret behind bringing psychopaths to life. "What really makes the characters fun and compelling is if people can relate to them, even if they are crazy and psychotic."

Otis is a compelling character alright, as he cuts a swath of blood-drenched gore through the film's supporting cast. Despite the murder and ultra-violence, however, Moseley says he was genuinely surprised by the controversy that stymied the release of *House of 1000 Corpses* for over two years.

"For the most part we shot all the house stuff – the interiors and the exteriors and the house itself – on the Universal backlot, and so we were really in spitting distance of the black tower, which was the executive centre of Universal,"

he says. "And they all seemed to really be loving it and they were watching the dailies, so there was an active participation on behalf of the Universal executives attached to the movie that was very supportive and encouraging."

Although Moseley has yet to see the finished movie (as does the rest of the cast), he says that working with Zombie instilled in him complete confidence in the finished project.

"As an actor I was just in love with the guy; he is an actor's director and was very easy to talk to and collaborate with," he says. "I was really surprised at how good he was. He was into it, and that's the thing that always inspires me. Just like when I worked on *Chainsaw 2* with Tobe Hooper and *Night of the Living Dead* with Tom Savini – they are directors who are into it, and that always inspires me because that's when I do my best work, when I'm into it as well. Rob really encouraged us to go for it so that's what I did. I trusted him implicitly and I really enjoyed the experience."

Moseley is no stranger to major delays, having also starred in William Hooper's (Tobe's son) stillborn *Chainsaw* riff *All American Massacre* (see RM#18). Although the film was shot well over a year ago, there are no immediate plans to release it in the near future.

"William wrote what was originally about a ten-minute scenario on digital video in his backyard just to show off his computer graphic skills," says Moseley. "And it wasn't specifically a *Chainsaw* script but it was very similar to it and he wanted me to play a Chop Top-like character who has been in jail for ten or fifteen years, and who is now being interviewed by a Geraldo-type film crew at the mental penitentiary and having a flashback about life in the Sawyer family. It started off at about ten minutes but I think now it's somewhere between forty-five and fifty minutes long."

With a little luck, we won't have to wait as long for his next psychotic episode.

Emma Anderson

makes no sense. So it's sort of like you could have the continuing adventures of certain people in the movie, but you could do it in a way that would be cool. It's hard to explain it without giving anything away, but I wouldn't be opposed to it because I think there are ways to do it. It would be more like *Part 2* and continuing the story rather than just reiterating the same story again – that I wouldn't want to do, there would be no point.

Nevertheless you did say that you wanted to make other kinds of movies. What kind of movies can we expect from you in the future?

I don't know, I just love movies and I want to make movies. It could be another horror movie, it could be something else, I don't know. I'm writing another script that's not a horror movie but it's sort of like in that world, say, the way a movie like *Ed Wood* is in that world but it's not a horror movie.

What is the greatest thing you learned from making this movie?

I learned a lot – it's like every second of the day you're learning. But what I learned the most is that the film starts getting made before you even start. Because if the film is not cast properly or you don't have the right people, then you're playing a weird game all the way through it. And what I thought with, say, Bill, Sid and Karen, I knew they were the right people for those roles, so I didn't have to overdirect or baby step them, you know what I mean? I just knew they'd come in and nail it. A lot of the time you see movies and you just go, "why did they cast that guy? He's so wrong for that part." So, the more pre-production and the more you can do before the cameras role makes for a better movie, not to mention the better people you can have in every department, because it's amazing how one boneheaded person can really derail something. That's what I learned. ☠



**BILL MOSELEY IS
OTIS**



Zombie Invades Hollyweird: Movies are "all I really want to do," says Zombie. Expect the possibility of a non-genre film in the future.

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R.I.P. 2002: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2002 came and went, and with it, a few milestones in horror. Here's an overview of the year, and the Rue Morgue word on what you should have seen and what you should have missed...



BEST FEATURE FILM

THE RING

BEST INDEPENDENT FILM

DOG SOLDIERS

MOST ORIGINAL CONCEPT

TIE: SIGNS/THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE

MOST FRIGHTENING FILM

THE EYE

BEST (NEW) KILLER

ASAMI YAMAZAKI (Audition)

BEST DEATH SCENE

Shed scene from DOG SOLDIERS

GORIEST SCENE

End scene from AUDITION

CREEPIEST SCORE

THE RING by Hans Zimmer

BEST POSTER & TAGLINE

"The Power of Christ Impales You!"
(JESUS CHRIST VAMPIRE HUNTER)

BEST DVD REISSUE

NEAR DARK (Anchor Bay)

BEST BOX ART FOR VHS AND DVD

EVIL DEAD NECRONOMICON

BOOK OF THE DEAD (Anchor Bay)

BEST FILM YOU DIDN'T SEE

BLOOD FEAST 2: ALL U CAN EAT

THE WORST CINEMATIC ATROCITY

TO WOUND YOUR RETINAS IN 2002

FEAR DOT COM

BEST FICTION BOOK

CORALINE by Neil Gaiman

BEST NON-FICTION BOOK

THE HAUNTED WORLD OF MARIO BAVA
(Troy Howarth, Fab Press)

BEST COMIC BOOK

30 DAYS OF NIGHT

by Steve Niles & Ben Templesmith

BEST COMIC BOOK ARTIST

KANNO KANG AND ZACK SUH
(DEFIANCE)

BEST MUSICAL ACT

NEKROMANTIX

BEST ALBUM

RETURN OF THE LOVING DEAD
(NEKROMANTIX)

BEST ALBUM COVER

PITCH BLACK - Kevin Cross &
Rick Remender

BEST ANIME

VAMPIRE HUNTER D: BLOODLUST

BEST GAME

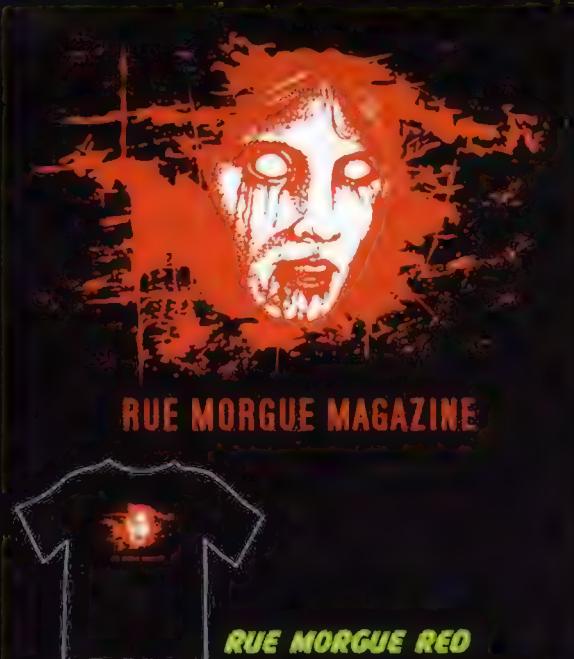
THE THING (Konami/PlayStation 2)

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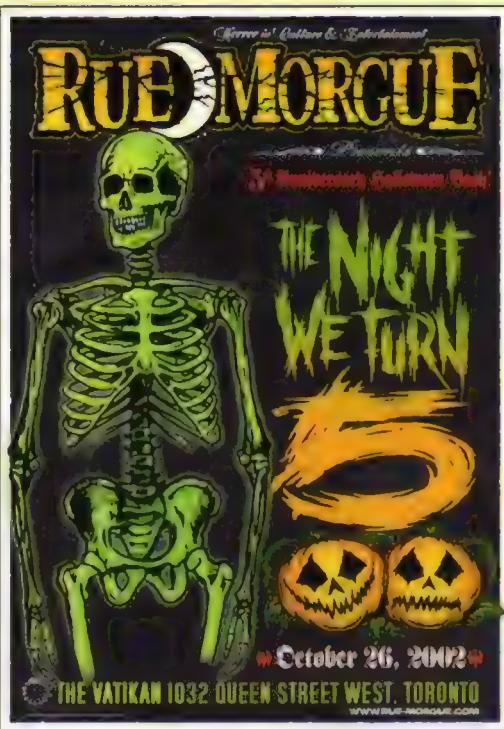
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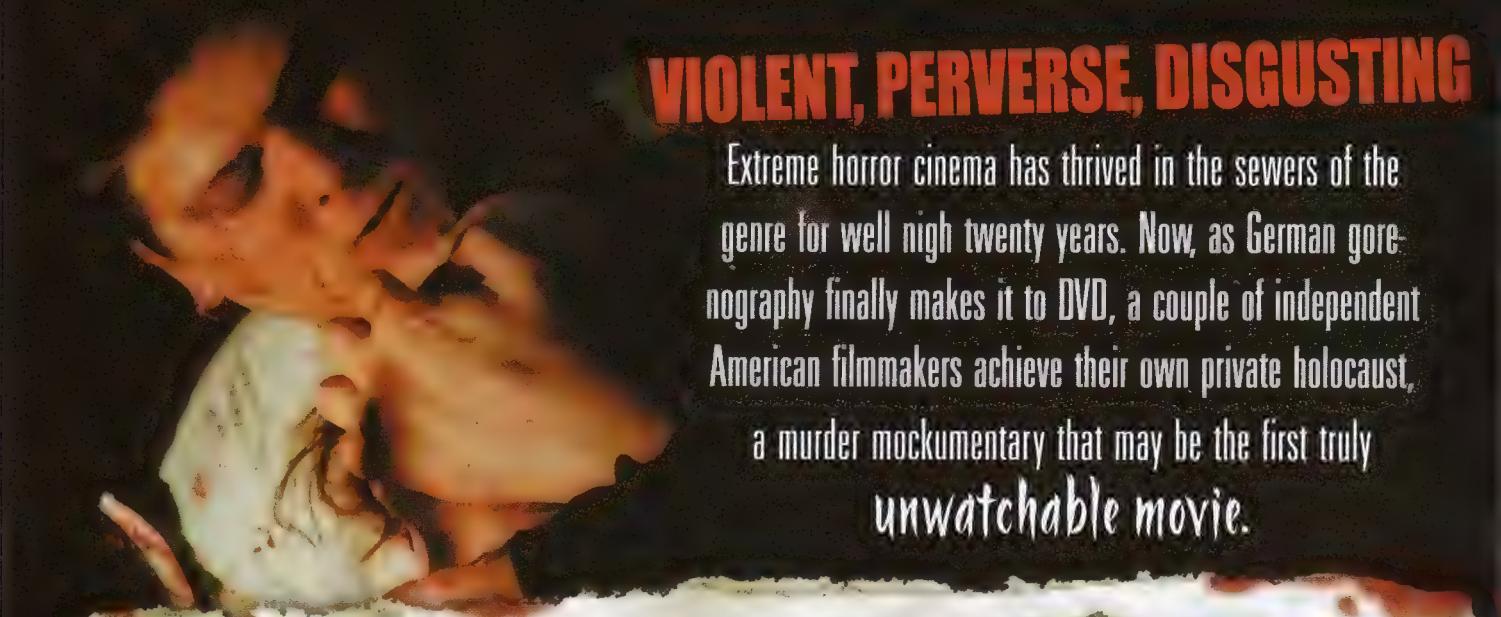
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VIOLENT, PERVERSE, DISGUSTING



Extreme horror cinema has thrived in the sewers of the genre for well nigh twenty years. Now, as German gore-nography finally makes it to DVD, a couple of independent American filmmakers achieve their own private holocaust, a murder mockumentary that may be the first truly unwatchable movie.

VIDEO NASTIES

FRED VOGEL AND AUGUST UNDERGROUND

by Mike Watt

In the independent horror community, the serial killer film is king. It's cheaper to make than even the lowest-grade vampire movie. All you really need is a guy, a fake knife, and a bevy of young girls to be horribly butchered in every scene. We're not even talking your average slasher film, we're talking the misogynistic white-male rape fantasy that camcorder artists love to make and use to flood the independent markets. So when Fred Vogel first gave me a copy of his movie, *August Underground*, and told me what it was about, I actually didn't want to watch it.

I got five minutes into the movie before I had to turn it off. Not because it was bad – quite the opposite. It was so well done, I was actually considering calling the director and asking him to verify that the actors portraying his victims really are alive. This isn't hyperbole. I'm not Charlie Sheen who can't tell a realistic effect from a snuff film. *August Underground* was truly in a league of its own. What made it unique was that it didn't even try to pretend that it had a story. In fact, it felt more like stumbling across someone's home movie.

It begins cold, without credits. The unseen cameraman is filming an empty beer bottle on the ground when his unnamed friend comes up from behind him. "Come here, dude," he says. "I want to show you something." "Something" consists of a young girl tied to a chair, naked and terrified, her nipple clotted over into a bloated

scar, her skin stained with blood and feces. The cameraman starts to giggle delightedly.

August Underground proceeds from there, as the pair travel around aimlessly, looking for – and finding – new victims to humiliate and torture. In between random acts of rape and murder, they pass by a Roadside Attraction in Fredericksburg to admire a large indoor miniature railroad. The message is chillingly clear: these guys could be anywhere. The man who appears on screen doesn't look like a brutal sex-murderer, he's indistinct. And when the movie is over, they're still out there.

"These guys are your neighbors," Vogel says. "They're at the PTA meetings with the other parents. You don't know. That's the thing we wanted to get across: you don't know who anybody is these days."

As *August Underground*'s killer, Vogel is an imposing, brutal figure. He fills the frame, seething with both potential and active violence. Sitting before me is a man with the same face, but with different eyes, wearing a bright, colourful shirt, smiling as he speaks. Never once do I get the impression he's about to kill me.

Originally from New Jersey, Vogel came to Pittsburgh to study special effects at the Art Institute. Not too long after he graduated, he spent a short time teaching makeup techniques at the Douglas School in Monessen, which later became The Tom Savini School of Special Make-Up. During that time, he'd met his future Absu

Films business partner and the two sat down to write what would become *August Underground*.

It seemed like a great idea at the time, to put together the most grueling serial killer film ever made, but they didn't quite stop to think what would happen if they actually succeeded. From all accounts, they did: *August Underground* unfolds in a life-defying litany of real-time snuff violence that very few people – hardcore horror fans included – would care to stomach. Not surprisingly, much like the films that came before it (see sidebar), *August Underground* was born into controversy. This time, however, the censure was imposed from the very people who created it. The movie has been officially held back mainly because its co-producer – who refers to himself by the pseudonym "Allen Peters" to protect his identity – has come to the sobering realization that its distribution, however slight, could haunt him the rest of his life. Some of the film's other participants have also followed suit, with the end result that *August Underground* is mired in what Vogel calls "a bunch of legal problems." More and more the actor/director is the sole voice trying to make the movie available to the public.

"I think he was scared of the success that could come out of it," Fred says of his partner. "I think it really shocked him the way it came out, it was the whole Frankenstein syndrome. There were times we both sat there wondering, 'what have we done? Should we put this out? What if

we become big? I want to do bigger movies too, but I want to make horror movies. That's all I want to do. And I think I've made my best one so far!"

Seen by just over 100 people as of the time of this writing, *August Underground* is not as original as it is, simply put, exceedingly effective. Seamless choreography, undetectable special effects and cold realism add up to just over 70 minutes of what could pass off as bona fide snuff – cinematic trauma of the highest order.

"Originally I wanted to do a documentary," recalls Vogel. "I'd heard of *Man Bites Dog* [the 1992 French satire about a charismatic serial killer followed by a documentary film crew] and thought the concept was really cool [but] I wanted to take it a step further. I wrote a story and showed it to Allen. Allen came up with his ideas – 'what if we take this out, work to make this make more sense' – and it morphed into what *August Underground* became."

The movie began to take more shape once filming began. Originally casting an actor with a "Clark Kent quality" to play the role of the onscreen killer, Vogel found it difficult to direct from the outside of the scene.

"The movie really was turning into something different [than what I'd envisioned]," he says. "It was really hard for me to direct, because I wanted the free flow with the camera. I'd have to direct from the outside, then have the cameraman go in with the scene, and I couldn't see it. I'd have to watch the playback. This really didn't work out, and Allen just told me that I should be playing the character."

When the original actor expressed problems with the story's more graphic content, Vogel was forced to take over the role. Filmed mostly in his home in Belle Vernon with side trips to New Jersey, the movie became, in a sense, a two-man operation. Vogel and Peters were the entire crew, planning the intricate, single-take shots, taking on the challenges of lighting and special effects on their own. From the outside, it may have looked like an amateur home video, but that was all part of the act. The story was tightly scripted, and every detail planned.

In one scene, the killer asks for assistance from the cameraman. The camera is set down, seemingly idly, but it's left pointing at a dead television screen, in which is reflected the vital action going on in the room. It's the only time you see the cameraman, though only peripherally, and it's a brilliantly executed shot. The movie's nastiness is pervasive. Watching it makes you wonder how Vogel and Peters were able to convince their fellow actors to participate.

GERMAN UNDERGROUND

NEKROMANTIK AND SCHRAMM COME TO DVD

In the wide-ranging world of horror cinema, there are movies that purely set out to shock you, to shake your everyday view of humanity to the core, testing the limits of what even the most hardened genre fans will watch – movies that make you turn your head in disgust, thinking, "Why would anyone make this?" Movies that ruin your day. Movies like *August Underground*. Or *Nekromantik* and *Schramm*, the German precursors to disgusting, extreme body horror, now available on DVD from Barrel Entertainment.

The first feature from notorious German underground filmmaker Jorg Buttgereit shot on grainy Super-8 in the mid-eighties, *Nekromantik* turns its lens on Rob (Daktari Lorenz), a young man who spends his workweek cleaning up horrible roadside accidents while pocketing the odd body part or two for later fulfillment at home with his girlfriend Betty (Beatrice M.). But when Rob picks up an entire rotted corpse lifted from the nearby lake and totes it home to sweetie, she becomes sexually enamored with it and splits, leaving him all alone. Unable to cope with his loss(es), Rob goes down a twisted road of sickness and self-abuse before finding salvation at the end of a very sharp knife.

Despite Buttgereit's playful characterizations and jovial musical score, *Nekromantik* is a nauseating vision that delivers the gore groceries in just about the most un-fun manner you could imagine. Though there are indeed moments where you sense the director is just having fun making a splatter movie ("We were a naive bunch of loonies trying to do a feature film out of nothing over a period of two years... [but] everybody took this film so seriously when it was finished," he writes in his liner notes for Barrel's release), it's still a shocking, grating cinematic experience, and one you don't want to watch when mom's in the same country. Aside from the obligatory corpse-love, one scandalous scene in particular involves the skinning of a live rabbit. Cult director John Waters, no stranger to real-life animal death on

screen, said it best when he plugged the film as "Ground-breakingly gruesome!" and "The best erotic film for necrophiles!" *Kissed it ain't*.

Released five years after *Nekromantik*, Buttgereit's *Schramm* is a different animal altogether. It opens on Lothar Schramm (Florian Koerner von Gustorf), the notorious "Lipstick Killer," dying, face-down, in a pool of his own blood. In a series of flashbacks, we see him running by the sea, lustng after a prostitute (Monika M.), and staggering uncertainly through his disturbed life. We also see him put people to death in the most grisly manner imaginable.

"We had seen a lot of so-called 'serial killer' movies, but most of the time it seemed to us that these films were more about some police guys who try to quit smoking because their wife left them," writes Buttgereit. "In the end they hunt the killer down, put him in jail,

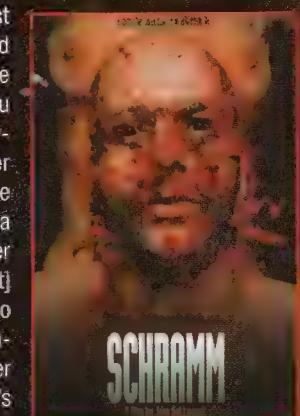
and the world is saved."

Unlike *Nekromantik*, which is straight up, unrepentant exploitation, *Schramm* is more of an art-house feature; it's not so much concerned with the vicious crimes of the murderer as it is with what triggers it, the anti-social personality and what is behind this psychological disorder.

This isn't to say that *Schramm* is tame by any stretch – this *Rue Morgue* writer almost blew his Olde English and Mickey D's... twice – it's just one of the most honest and intelligent serial killer films ever made, one that would be as much at home in a criminal psychology class as it would in a sleazy movie house.

Barrel Entertainment has spared no expense on both discs with extravagances unseen on underground movies such as these, including audio commentaries with Buttgereit, co-author Franz Rodenkirchen, and the lead actors, along with cool behind-the-scenes docs on both features, some early short films by the director, a music video, trailers, and extensive galleries containing over 100 stills each. Unfortunately, Prozac's not included.

Nathan Tyler



MORE

GERMAN UNDERGROUND

PREMUTOS

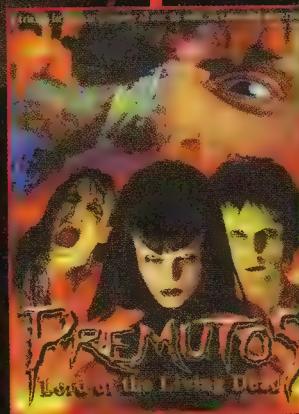
Olaf Ittenbach rose from the late '80s German underground horror scene that spawned Jorg Buttgereit and Andreas Schnaas. His first two films, *Black Past* (1989) and *The Burning Moon* (1992), are outrageously offensive, ultra-cheap shot-on-video gorefests. Poorly acted, shot and dubbed, these films have achieved cult status among splatter fans. Five years later, Ittenbach moved to the film format. Little else changed.

Borrowing heavily from *The Evil Dead*, and riffing off of *Dawn of the Dead* and Peter Jackson's *Dead Alive* (*Braindead*), *Premutos: Der gefallene Engel* thunders its way to a roaring climax lifted straight out of *Demons*, managing to surpass even that film's audacious *deus ex machina*. The movie suffers from porn-level acting and is dumber than all of Jim Carrey's films rolled into one, but anyone seeking it out is looking for non-stop gore and they're sure to be rewarded. The litany of bodily violations presented onscreen reads like the back of a Carcass album: decapitation, dismemberment, evisceration, exsanguination, exenteration, eventration... ad infinitum. The cavalcade of carnage that will careen across the cathode ray tube of your traumatized television will leave you doubled over and dry heaving into your empty microwave popcorn bowl.

The gore is hung on an ambitious bit of nonsense that posits that the first angel cast from heaven was named Premutos. His son is to make way for his coming, but is defeated at various points in history. This is related in flashbacks suffered by the latest reincarnation of his son, Mathias (Ittenbach), a shiftless, nondescript clod. After suffering a severe groin injury from a wayward soccer ball, Mathias mutates into a hideous demon while missing a rather tedious family dinner on the floor below. Before you can say "Argh!", it's ugly people versus a zombie horde in a stupefying bargain basement bloodbath.

Premutos: Der gefallene Engel circulated for years as a German language bootleg. The new Shock-O-Rama DVD features both the original German language version and a badly dubbed English version that omits the original soundtrack entirely. Suffice it to say that the audio on either track will fail to excite a surround sound system. The print used is flawless but dingy and grainy, no doubt a result of cheap film stock. Extras include a 45-minute Making Of featurette, and two dozen trailers for other Shock-O-Rama titles, mainly of the soft porn ilk. Ittenbach's obvious enthusiasm for gleeful gore will surely win the withered hearts of gorehounds the world over, everyone else is advised to move on.

Gore-met



"What I had to make my actors do took a lot of sweet talking," Vogel admits. "But they believed in me, and they believed in themselves and they believed in the film.

We'd do a scene, I'd be over hugging Annie and telling her everything was okay, taking the time to do that, rather than just walking away and taking the time to have my cigarette and just leaving her in the chair with the makeup artist fixing her up. I was really a loving director. I tried to be, because it needed it. I had to go from being completely nuts, to being a father figure and saying that everything was okay."

Ultimately, Peters took his name off the project, and subsequently left Pittsburgh, left Absu Films, and set out to wipe *August Underground* from his resume. The movie, however, remains as a testament of his technical skills as a filmmaker.

"I love the guy," Vogel says, not without a hint of sadness. "We started Absu Films together, even though now Absu Films is no longer what it was when we started. Working with Allen was a time in my life that I'll never forget, though I wish things had turned out differently."

For a while, Fred was heading up what became known as Absu Digital, with a near-six pack of new partners, including Michael Schneider, the creator of a short called *A Tribute to Sanity* which won awards for Best Cinematography and Best Horror Short at the prestigious New York

International Independent Film & Video Festival. He's a horror fan too, obviously, and a supporter of *August Underground*. Not every member of Absu Digital was, though. Within weeks of the reorganization, Vogel and Absu Digital completely split ways. His partners, like Peters, wanted nothing to do with the movie and officially disassociated themselves from it on the company's website.

Vogel subsequently formed Toe Tags Pictures with Schneider, Jerami Cruise and Kristian Hickman. The group is hard at work on a horror film called *The Colwells*, for which they have managed to generate interest from Michael (*The Hills Have Eyes*) Berryman, Doug (*Hellraiser*) Bradley and Jasi (*The Resurrection Game*) Cotton Lanier.

"I think it's bullshit that horror movies don't get accepted to the Oscars and that people look down on them," Vogel says of the genre. "Death is something we all fear. If it's a monster with makeup or a couple of guys from next door, the monster embodies the fear. I like my heart racing fast, I look forward to having nightmares. It sounds a little sick, but it gives me ideas for the films or the shorts or what I'm doing next. The horror community is a real family. These people take care of you for the rest of your life if you stay true to them. Show the fans what they want to see and be loyal. That's what I plan to be and that's not what I think Allen wanted any part of."

Will *August Underground* ever see the light of day? Drop in at www.toetagspictures.com for ongoing updates and info.

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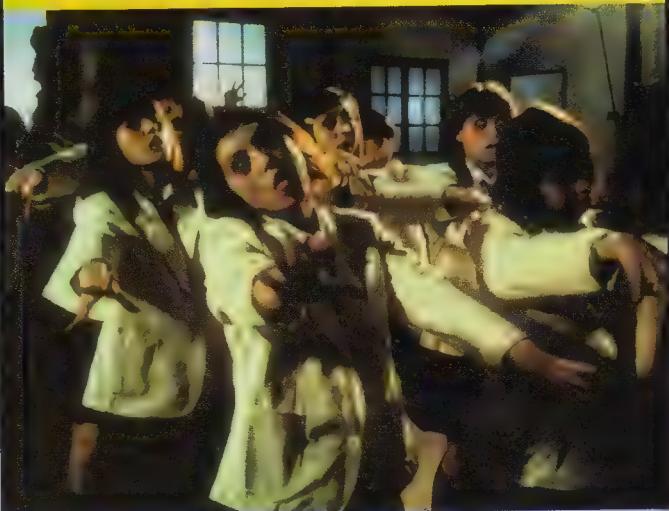
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THE DEFINITIVE 2003 CONVENTION SCHEDULE

The horror convention is not just a cool place to find rare collectibles, it's hard proof that Halloween indeed happens all year 'round. Nowhere else will you find so many fans, fiends, stars and starlets all under one roof amidst a mountain of memorabilia, toys and movies... a horror lover's wet dream!

Of course, not all conventions are the same, which is why we have decided to select only the best from the best for you, loyal reader, to facilitate your travel plans. We encourage you to check out the listed websites for details and changes (if any). And if you happen to make it out, look for the *Rue Morgue* booth... the Rue Crew is always happy to meet you.

JANUARY

Monsters Among Us

Horror and Sci-Fi

January 4-5, 2003

Los Angeles, California

www.glamourcon.com/mau.html

APRIL

World Horror Convention

Literary Expo

April 17-20, 2003

Kansas City, Missouri

www.whc2003.org

MARCH

FrightVision

Nostalgia/Memorabilia

Collector's Expo

March 28-30, 2003

Independence, Ohio

www.frightvision.com

Chiller Theatre

Toy, Model and Film Expo

April 25-27, 2003

E. Rutherford, New Jersey

www.chillertheatre.com

JUNE

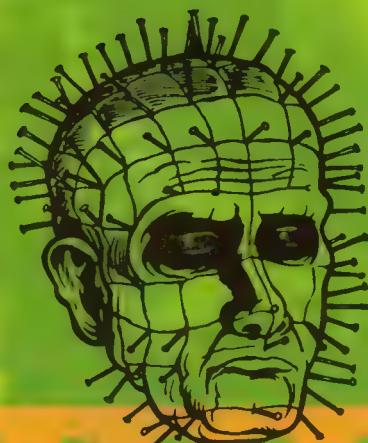
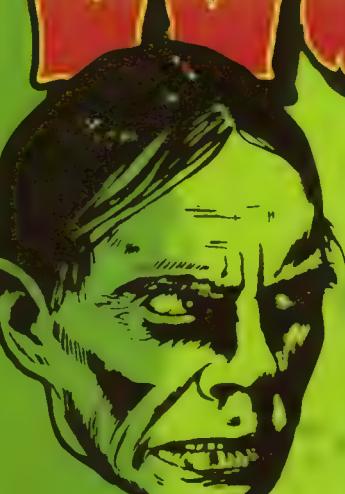
The 2nd Annual Flashback

Weekend Horror and Sci-fi Convention

June 13-15, 2003

Rosemont, Illinois

www.flashbackweekend.com



REEL FEAR

Just want to see the movies? Here's where they're showing...

Exofest II

January 2003

Calgary, Alberta

www.exophagy.com/exofest

Fantasporto 2003

February 21-March 1, 2003

Porto, Portugal

www.fantasporto.online.pt

Brussels Festival of Fantasy Film

March 15-30, 2003

Brussels, Belgium

www.bifff.org

Dead by Dawn

April 25-28, 2003

Edinburgh, Scotland

www.deadbydawn.co.uk

Cinemuerte

July 2003

Vancouver, British Columbia

www.cinemuerte.com

FantAsia

July 2003

Montreal, Quebec

www.fantasiafestival.com

HORROR

Monster Bash

International Classic Monster Movie Convention and Expo
June 20-22, 2002
Butler, Pennsylvania
www.creepyclassics.com/bash.html

JULY

Comic-Con International
July 17-20, 2003
San Diego, California
www.comic-con.org

AUGUST

Third Annual Horrorfind Weekend
August 15-17, 2003
Hunt Valley, Maryland
www.horrorfindweekend.com

SFX

Canadian National Science Fiction Expo
August 22-24, 2003
Toronto, Ontario
www.hobbystar.com/T0-SFX/index.html

TorCon III

The 61st World Science Fiction Convention
August 28-September 1, 2003
Toronto, Ontario
www.torcon3.on.ca

DragonCon

Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Convention
August 29-September 1, 2003
Atlanta, Georgia
www.dragoncon.com

SEPTEMBER

Monster Mania
Horror Film and Memorabilia Convention
September 26-28, 2003
Cherry Hill, Philadelphia
www.monstermania.net

OCTOBER

Cinema Wasteland
Drive-In Era Movies and Memorabilia From the Late '50s to Present Day
October 3-5, 2003
Cleveland, Ohio
www.cinemawasteland.com

Chiller Theatre

Halloween Expo
October 31—November 2, 2003
E. Rutherford, New Jersey
www.chillertheatre.com

Mary-Beth Hollyer

28th Toronto International Film Festival: Midnight Madness
September 4-13, 2003
Toronto, Ontario
www.e.bell.ca/filmfest/

Sitges Fantastic Film Festival
October 2003
Catalonia, Spain
www.sitges.com

Shriekfest

October 11th & 12th, 2003
Los Angeles, California
www.shriekfest.com

New York City Horror Film Festival
October 2003
New York, New York
www.moodudefilms.com/mainpage.htm

Rhode Island International Film Festival
October 2003
Rhode Island, New York
www.film-festival.org

ScreamFest
October 2003
Hollywood, California
www.screamfestla.com





BEGINNING IN 1968, SLEAZE MERCHANT SAM SHERMAN
INVADED AMERICAN DRIVE-INS WITH A DEMENTED
COLLECTION OF GORE FILMS SHOT IN THE PHILIPPINES.
NOW, THIRTY YEARS LATER, IMAGE RELEASES
THE BLOOD COLLECTION.

THE DEFINITIVE CATALOGUE OF SHERMAN'S LOST LEGACY.

THE BLOOD SPATTERED GUIDE

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER

Gone are the days of the "Blood" flick. H.G. Lewis started the craze in 1963 with his exploitation classic *Blood Feast* and the trend continued to mutate throughout the sixties and into the saucy seventies – *Blood and Black Lace*, *Blood From the Mummy's Tomb*, *Bloody Pit of Horror*, *Blood Demon*, *I Drink Your Blood*... the list goes on. If you wanted your import horror flick to fly on the drive-in circuit, just stick the B word onto the marquee and the kids were sure to come.

No one knew this better than Sam Sherman, legendary exploitation producer, undisputed Overlord of the "Blood" movie and lifelong friend/bankroller of late C-movie king Al Adamson (the man behind the epic frankenfilm *Brain of Blood*). Now, thirty odd years after his gore bombs exploded in drive-ins across America, Sherman (along with Image Entertainment) is ensuring that your TV stays sick 'n' silly – and he's bent on making the word "Blood" synonymous with quirky and chlorophyll. Confused? Read on....

In the early 1960s Sherman was editing a little puff magazine for James (Creepy, Eerie) Warren called *Screen Thrills Illustrated*, but jonesing to break into the business on a deeper level.

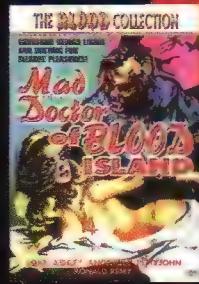
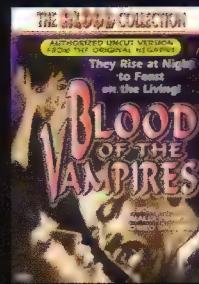
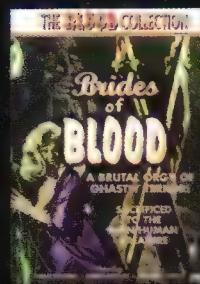
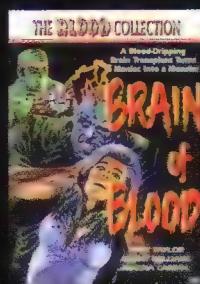
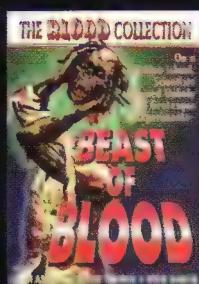
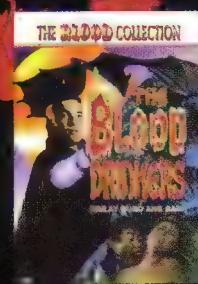
"I was editing the magazine while also working on my own projects," remembers the veteran sleaze merchant from his home office in New

York. "And, in 1962, I went to Hollywood and met up with an actor named Denver Dixon, who happened to be the father of Al Adamson."

Through old-time Western idol Dixon, Sherman eventually hooked up with a fledgling American/Philippine indie company called Hemisphere Pictures which was whipping out whacks of war programmers (most notably 1964's *Walls of Hell*). Sherman convinced them that in order to score with the US market, the way to go was horror. He was right. In 1968, Hemisphere unleashed *The Blood Drinkers*, a super spooky, curiously multi-tinted Hammer riff, shot in the Philippines and directed by M.D.-turned-schlockmeister Gerry DeLeon.

"The colour tints in *The Blood Drinkers* are according to [fellow director] Eddie Romero, due to the fact that colour film was too expensive in the Philippines," explains Sherman. "The black-and-white footage was integrated with the colour but tinted red or blue."

Schizo colour schemes aside, the film was a modest success topped only by the following year's sex and gore-laden epic *Brides of Blood*. The Blood films kept turning coin, encouraging Sherman (who served as advisor on many of these productions) to form his own company, Independent International. Along with Adamson, Independent International began pumping out Blood films of their own (including Adamson's



own *Brain of Blood*, *Blood of Ghastly Horror*, *Blood of Dracula's Castle* and the uproarious John Carradine vehicle *Horror of the Blood Monsters*).

Fast-forward to the late '90s: Sherman begins licensing out the Independent International titles to DVD and, through bizarre twists of fate, eventually gets his paws on the Hemisphere catalogue. Now those gore-mad rascals over at Image have, under Sherman's strict supervision, restored and re-released some of Hemisphere and Independent International's best known and most notorious plasmatic pictures and stuck them under the suitable moniker *The Blood Collection*. Included in this collector's dream are five of the finest natives-gone-nasty films ever made: *The Blood Drinkers*, *Blood of the Vampires* and the *Blood Island* series – *Brides of Blood*, *Mad Doctor of Blood Island* and *Beast of Blood* – as well as Sherman/Adamson's absolutely bonkers 1971 sickle *Brain of Blood*.

It's the *Blood Island* films, co-directed by De Leon and Hemisphere founder Eddie Romero, that are the real draw of this set. Starring matinee idol flunkey John (Frankenstein's Daughter) Ashley, they feature a wacky misfit called the chlorophyll monster, a mossy dude who bleeds green sauce and leaves his victims looking like overcooked broccoli! They're strange, they're wild, they're cheap, they're creepy (sometimes crappy), but most importantly, they're BLOODY!

Sherman has painstakingly supervised the restorations of these demented drive-in mess-terpieces; each disc features detailed commentary by the man himself and above average, full-screen prints that are, for better or worse, the best editions seen since their theatrical premieres. Most importantly, every film is com-

pletely uncut.

"Independent International now represents the financial owners of these films," says Sherman, "and through them we were fortunate enough to get the original negatives to restore."

Indeed, this writer remembers catching the zoom lens happy *Mad Doctor of Blood Island* on Elvira's syndicated show many moons ago under the misleading title *Tomb of the Living Dead*. Not only was this picture devoid of tombs or zombies (reissued TV prints forbade the use of the word "blood" in the title), but there was nary a speck of the red stuff in sight – that's right, NO GORE!

Imagine my surprise when I popped Image's newly released disc in my player and witnessed one of the grossest sixties sleazies I've never seen – gobs of jiggly island girls run around naked in this cut as well. And as an added bonus, the long unseen "green blood challenge" promo spot (devised by Sherman) is included intact before the opening credits. How cool is that?

No doubt about it, Sam Sherman deserves a warm red slap on the back for hosing off these ketchup classics and sicking them on fans and first-timers alike. And yet, even with an extensive, celebrated body of '70s cinematic sludge under his belt, one would wonder if the self-proclaimed film scholar feels a touch of regret, having abandoned hopes of a career in "legitimate" filmmaking in favour of living the life of a gush-slinger.

"Regrets?" he proclaims. "No! I loved horror, I loved exploitation films! Still do. For me, the chance to work on these movies,

the chance to come up with ways to sell them, was my dream come true. I'm proud of my work with AI and I'm proud of the creative input I had on the *Blood Island* films."

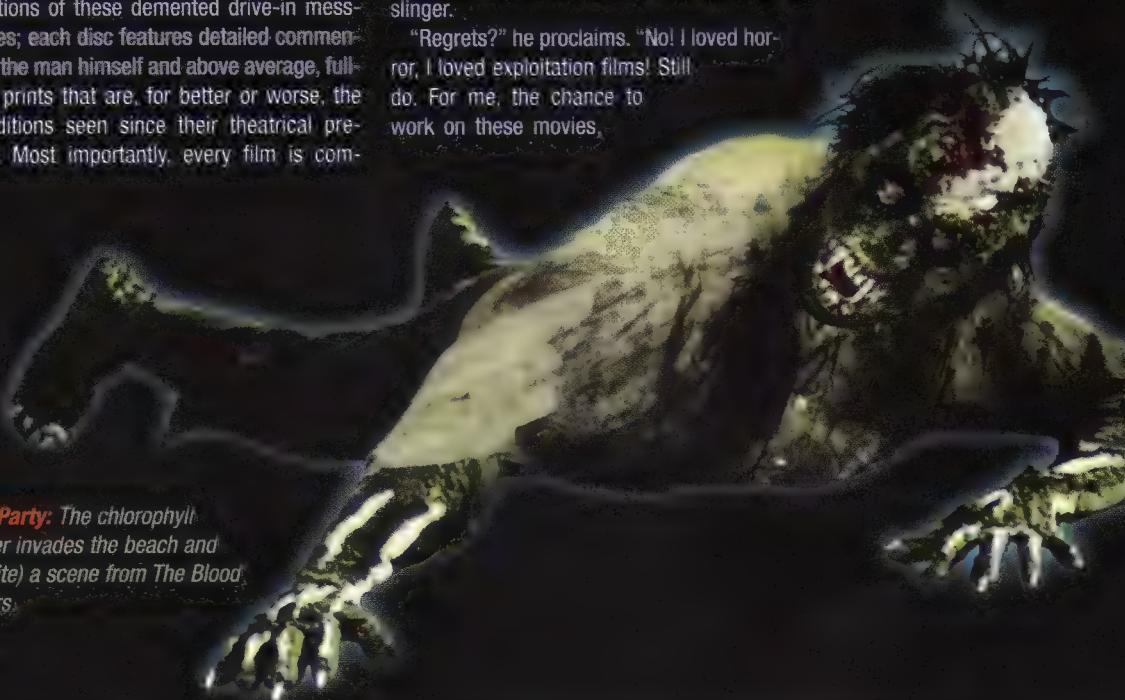
One look at *Brain of Blood*, starring old-time Hollywood character actor Kent Taylor and penned by Sherman himself, proves that pride. Sherman admits it is one of the company's best pictures and calls it "a real labour of love."

Indeed, *Brain of Blood* is a film so thoroughly spaced out that only someone who truly loved the genre could dare unleash it. Loose, messy and crude, it seems to be made up of bits and pieces of other films, even going as far as to recycle Tito Alveiro's blaring score for *Mad Doctor of Blood Island*. There's even some really icky (and totally jarring) brain surgery stock footage thrown in for gross measure. Needless to say, the kids flocked to see it.

"I found that no matter what crazy thing I did with these pictures, somehow, somewhere, somebody loved them," says Sherman.

There's no disputing that the fans of these films are legion. And now thanks to Sherman's inspired lunacy of re-releasing them in lovingly detailed deluxe editions, horror geeks worldwide have a chance to take a long, hot, steamy, semi-coagulated blood bath in the scum-soaked sanctions of Image's titanically titillating *Blood Collection*. Thank you Uncle Sam, crown prince of Horrific Hemoglobin! ☺

Blood Party: The chlorophyll monster invades the beach and (opposite) a scene from *The Blood Drinkers*.





HAPPY PENCIL

ART BY CAM de LEON

By Gary Pullin



Clockwise from top: Flesh-a-Sketch, Gnats, Ocular Orifice, Secrets and HappyHome.

Despondent figures lurk in the shadows, grotesque shapes stare out with lonely, alien eyes.... Yup, Cam de Leon's body of work is anything but cheerful, despite the deceiving moniker. The astute among you will have recognized his illos for the band Tool; in fact, Cam has collaborated with guitarist/spxf wizard Adam Jones to render disturbed visions that have become an integral part of Tool's mysterious imagery. Whether it's for albums, tour shirts, morose mosaics for Tool's stop-motion-animated *Prison Sex* video, or ghastly body paint for the *Stinkfist* video, Cam's bleak vision is largely responsible for the band's "dark art" aesthetic.

Surf the world wide web and check out de Leon's gloomy corner at Happypencil.com. A digital playground/portfolio for his morbid muse, Happypencil's dark attractions have yielded some 23 million hits in its first year alone. A self-taught artist, de Leon's paintings come strangely alive on his breeding flesh site. Click on Play and try your hand at the grisly *Flesh-A-Sketch*, where you're offered a piece of broken glass to cut the flesh of a cowing steer. And if you feel bad about it, you can always click on Heal to soothe the wounds. In this dark place, happiness is a scar.

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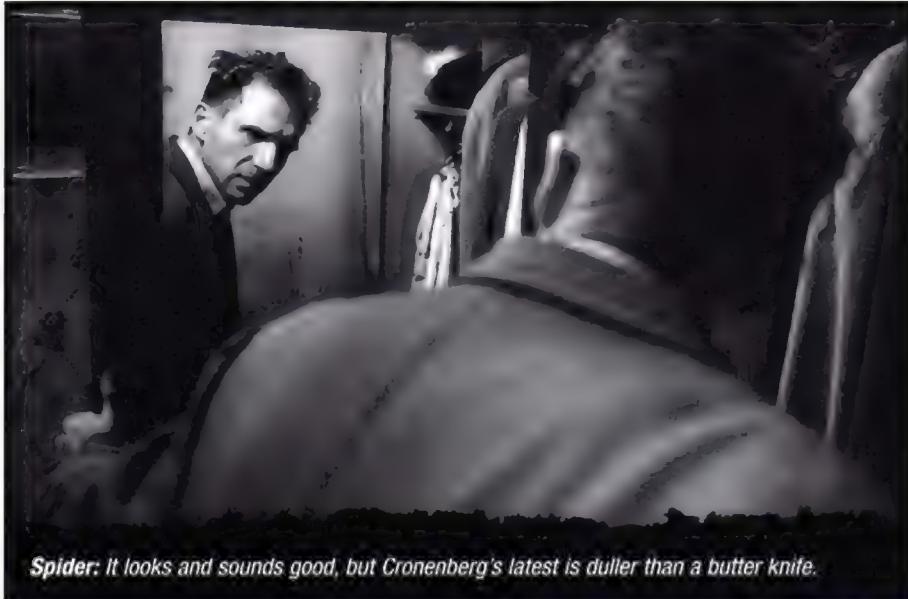
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Spider: It looks and sounds good, but Cronenberg's latest is duller than a butter knife.

SQUISH

SPIDER

Starring Ralph Fiennes, Miranda Richardson and Gabriel Byrne

Directed by David Cronenberg

Written by Patrick McGrath and David Cronenberg

Based on the novel by Patrick McGrath
Alliance Atlantis

David Cronenberg started out in the splatter business and eventually won the respect of the worldwide film community, as an "auteur" no less (a term that must be the critical community's inward for giving in to a filmmaker's vision). Irony of ironies, Cronenberg may have fought hard for respect, but now that he has it, he's locked it up in his trophy case and thrown away the key. At some point (circa *Naked Lunch*), Canada's top cinematic export began dabbling with chemicals both artsy and fartsy, and that's where we find him on *Spider*, perilously close to blowing up the lab with an "award winning" windbag of a film.

Boasting lush accolades from the worldwide film community, it's a tough call for us at *Rue Morgue* to say anything bad about Cronenberg's latest. But we'll try. Near as we can figure it, all the back patting has to do with the nuts and bolts of the thing – the act-

ing, the cinematography (which is haunting and pristine), and things like composition and lighting – all expertly executed here, no question.

But really, what brings people to the movies is character and story. Cronenberg gives us character: Ralph Fiennes as a mumbling Dennis Clegg a.k.a. Spider, a man who has been institutionalized with acute schizophrenia for some twenty years and who tries to piece together his past. Fiennes' performance is exceptional, but it doesn't hide the fact that the character commands little interest. On paper, the story of little Spider and his mom (Richardson) and dad (Byrne) caught in a paranoid web of infidelity and murder has the makings of great drama, but in Cronenberg's hands it rolls out like a film essay on Theme and Symbolism. It's tough to see a man underdirect his cast to the point of narrative coma and then have to listen to film critics gush about how moving it all is. It isn't.

It's worth noting at this point that though *Spider* is a dark movie, it doesn't try to be a genre piece, it tries to be great art. But the best art in the world is measured by its ability to engage an audience long enough to communicate ideas both simple and profound – that's what makes *The Devil's Backbone* more than just a ghost story, and *Spider* nothing more than a masterfully recorded

single note. Not that Cronenberg isn't capable of great things; *Spider* just proves that the master of hyperreality loses his way in reality.

Rod Gudino

NO ONE DOES NUDIE VAMPS BETTER THAN JEAN ROLLIN!

FIANÇÉE OF DRACULA

Starring Cyrille Iste, Brigitte Lahaye, and Celine Mariage

Written and directed by Jean Rollin
Eurocine/Shriek Show

Born a glutton for the visual, I must confess that I was first drawn into Jean Rollin's latest by his trademark gorgeous backdrops and lush casting. Or perhaps that's just my soft spot for unusual European beauties, particularly the ravishing Magalie Aguado. The most delicious aspect of *Fiancée of Dracula* is that it invites you into its seductions without blindsiding you with gratuitous sex. All that, decent acting and a strange, engaging plot too.

I want to hate that the film opens on a terribly cliché shot of an ominous looking cemetery but I can't because it sets the tone for the next 95 minutes and the cliché is thankfully blown to hell moments later when a midget enters the frame. The story starts out simply enough: two men (a professor and his assistant) are in search of "The Master" (Dracula, natch). Also on the trail are a host of voluptuous female Parallels (creatures that exist in both the human and vampire realms). The men are led to a nunnery full of depraved, bisexual and almost tortuously melodramatic nuns, to meet Dracula's distant relation and soon-to-be bride, the mad lady Isabelle (Cyrille Iste).

Of course, that very evening, under the cloak of darkness and a frightfully overacted strangulation, Isabelle is whisked away to begin the ritual that will wed her to Dracula. It's only after she arrives at his castle, that things begin to get really interesting; we're treated to a human sacrifice, the wickedly erotic act of vampire feeding (imagine pale otherworldly beauties licking fresh spilled blood from each other's flesh and lips; I simply adore this meeting of the macabre and passion – rawr! – all dark erotica should be



like this), two pathetic escape attempts, a violin solo and a not-to-be dismissed redressing of the gorgeous Isabelle into a very transparent mesh gown. Not anywhere near as tacky as it sounds in print, Rollin has mastered treating the female form as art. Each flash of breast is deliciously deliberate, obviously intended to leave us hungry and we are.

The fast pace becomes chaotic as everyone's intentions begin to collide. That said, there is a generous amount of death in the last ten minutes of the film. The only real crime in this otherwise solid film is the happy Hollywood ending. I don't care if it is foreign, it's uncalled for. The only thing more disappointing and unforgivable is the unwatchable English dubbed version, which I recommend avoiding at all costs; it is campy, grating, and pays no respect to the filmmaker's vision. There is only one special feature on this disc: an ultra-loud interview with Jean Rollin that can hardly hope to sate a fan's craving. The DVD's best feature is clearly the original French film, so come for the hunger, seduction and cinematography, or don't bother coming at all.

Monica S. Kuebler

CLOWNING AROUND

VULGAR DVD

Starring Brian Christopher O'Halloran, Jerry Lewkowitz and Matthew Maher
Written and directed by Bryan Johnson
Lions Gate Films

From filmmaker Kevin Smith's much-lauded View Askew universe (*Clerks*, *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*) spews forth *Vulgar*, the directorial debut of "in the family" bit-part thesp Bryan Johnson (*Mallrats*, *Dogma*). In what is best described as *Clerks* meets *America's Most Wanted* with a dash of *Deliverance*, *Vulgar* is the story of down-and-out party clown Will (O'Halloran), a.k.a. Flappy, a sad sack living a life of constant ridicule and abuse. Barely making ends meet, Will comes up with the bright idea of hiring himself out to bachelor parties as *Vulgar*, a clown sporting a bustier and fishnets.

On his first outing, however, he finds himself in a horrifying predicament — at the

mercy of psychopathic ingrates Ed (Lewkowitz) and his two sons, he is drugged, tortured, and brutally raped. Subsequent to this harrowing experience, Will finds himself in the middle of a completely unrelated hostage situation, and ends up saving the life of a young child. This event marks a change for the better in his life — a big-time TV executive (played by Kevin Smith) catches him on a talk show, and hires him for an all-new kid's show, making him an instant celebrity. But being a household name threatens to bring some skeletons out of his closet.

Perplexed? You should be. It's not that *Vulgar* is confusing per se, it's just that the film is such an unrelenting rollercoaster ride of strong emotions — there are instances where you can't help but laugh out loud at its comical situations, followed by moments where you're in mute horror at its sheer ugliness. The problem with *Vulgar*, despite its darkness, is that the director seems to be trying too hard to be like his mentor; like Smith, Bryan Johnson has a penchant for comic vignettes and long, monologue-like philosophical conversations. Does the film want to be the dark, brooding and disturbing drama it begs to be, or does it simply want to evoke a few chuckles with its hipster approach? I don't think Johnson was able to make up his mind.

Vulgar, though charismatic enough, is a mishmash of tragically diverse styles and moods that just doesn't work. Rent it if you're a *Clerks* fan and want to see a whole other side of Dante, otherwise... beware.

Nathan Tyler

THE OL' CHEESE TRAP

THE RATS (A.K.A. THE COLONY)

Starring Vincent Spano and Madchen Amick
Directed by John Lafia
Written by Frank Deasy
20th Century Fox Home Entertainment

At first glance — and as far as creature movies go — *The Rats* reeks of a cheese quotient that's about to blow through the stratosphere. Let's start with the fact that it's made-for-TV. I mean, really. And Vincent Spano? I mean, *really* really. But don't be fooled! This is one of those little gems that won't leave you feeling like you'll never get those



Vulgar: One confused clown.

90 minutes of your life back.

Now, before I go and blow the "must-see" horn too loudly, I just want to say for the record that, yes, *The Rats* is a tad cheesy. And yes, the effects are so-so. The story is unimaginative, the characters shallow, and the dialogue dull. But who cares!? These rats kick ass!

The story (which starts fifteen minutes too late) follows the path of a very discreet (and smartly-dressed) exterminator (Spano), who is called in to investigate a possible "rodent issue" within the walls of an upscale department store. Putting his years of ratsleuthing to work, he discovers that the store is a mecca for more than just the uptown crowd. With the help of the department store's operations manager (Madchen Amick, who played the lovely Ariel in Barry Sonnenfeld's TV revival of *Fantasy Island*), they set out to destroy the nest before the entire city is consumed by the deadly — and now on-the-rampage — vermin. Replete with suspenseful attack scenes and death to dumb characters who probably deserved to die anyway, *The Rats* transcends the made-for-TV curse, and truly deserves to be seen by fans of the creature feature. These rats are disgusting, hungry, disease-ridden, and on the loose... and they're the result of scientific experiments gone awry. What more do you want?



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Reissues



The Fog: A late competitor for the best DVD of 2002



FOG ROLLS IN

THE FOG DVD 1979

Starring Adrienne Barbeau, Jamie Lee Curtis and John Houseman

Directed by John Carpenter

Written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill

MGM Home Entertainment

After the belated success of *Halloween* (1978), "the most successful independent movie until the *Blair Witch*", John Carpenter re-teamed with Debra Hill to make something he had always wanted to make: a ghost story. Alas, initial test screenings did not receive his efforts positively. Simply put, *The Fog* just wasn't that scary, though it clearly tried to be.

Like *Halloween*, Carpenter was determined to save the movie with music, as well as some post-production shooting of nearly all of the film's violent death sequences. As a result, *The Fog* went on to earn moderate success and, later, cult status. Unfortunately for fans, the movie's eventual VHS release was a veritable video disaster – all prints were weak, murky transfers, which in today's high tech home video world would be considered unwatchable. That is, until now: MGM continues to make up for previous mistakes with another superb DVD release that boasts above average visuals, decent audio, and a slew of extra features that should keep fans from starting up any online petitions any time soon.

Although not perfect, the anamorphic

transfer of *The Fog* displays little grain, sharp colours, and good definition – not a small accomplishment considering the film's perpetual darkness. The 5.1 soundtrack is fine, but does not really stand out as particularly impressive, especially when one considers the quality of Carpenter's music, which is arguably as important here as it was on *Halloween*.

MGM's DVD scores most of its points in the extras department, where it features an original documentary shot in 1980, a new documentary especially made for this DVD, outtakes, a storyboard to film comparison, tons of advertisements, audio commentary by Carpenter and Hill and an accompanying booklet written by Carpenter himself. The new documentary is arguably the heart of the disc, with extensive comments from director and producer, along with cinematographer Dean Cundey who note that audiences were initially dissatisfied with the lack of blood and demanded more violence.

Commentary is excellent as well, and Carpenter keeps us interested by balancing a range of topics including special effects, anecdotes and motivation for particular scenes. There is also one easily located easter egg that will give you the skinny on the making of the titular mist. All in all, MGM's DVD is easily a late competitor for DVD release of the year.

Aaron Lupton

RETURN OF THE ZOMBIE KING

ZOMBI 3 DVD 1988

Starring Deran Serafian, Beatrice Ring and Marina Loi

Directed by Lucio Fulci and Bruno Mattei

Written by Claudio Fragasso

Most of you weirdos reading *Rue Morgue* already know this, but for those of you who don't, here goes: George Romero's 1978 masterpiece *Dawn of the Dead* (co-financed by Dario Argento) was released in Italy as *Zombi*. It was so successful, that the following year producers Fabrizio DeAngelis and Ugo Tucci commissioned a script from Dardano Sachetti for *Zombi 2*, a sort of pre-



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Zombi 3: Freakin' zombies everywhere!!

quel/rip-off of *Dawn* to be directed by Lucio Fulci. That film was released on these shores by exploitation huckster Jerry Gross as *Zombie*. So here we have the awkwardly titled *Zombi 3*, Fulci's 1988 follow-up to his notorious 1979 gorefest. You did not, I repeat did NOT miss *Zombie 2*. There is no *Zombie 2*. Just *Zombi 2*. We won't even bring up the fact that Andrea Bianchi's *Burial Ground* was also known in some circles as *Zombi 3*. With me so far? Well then, let's proceed....

Zombi 3 has a bad rep – Fulci's health was already spiraling downward by the time he set up shop in the Philippines to film this wacky gorefest, and über hack Bruno Mattei (*Rats: Night of Terror*) was called in to pad the troubled flick out to feature length. The end result is a truly demented amalgamation of *Return of the Living Dead*, Romero's *The Crazies*, Lenzi's *Nightmare City*, Lamberto Bava's *Demons* and Mattei's own *Hell of the Living Dead*.

Is it any good? Yes and no. The film isn't nearly as bad as it's purported to be. Set in some nameless tropical city (and filmed on the same Philippine locations as *Apocalypse Now*), *Zombi 3* begins with a lethal army-issued virus and a foolishly cremated victim. Sound familiar? The ashes from the crispy corpse become airborne, creating a nasty flock of lethal sparrows who proceed to peck

away at a pack of travelling morons. The virus spreads faster than you can say Uneeda Medical Supply, and soon the entire city is infested with oatmeal faced, homicidal, cannibalistic zombies.

The story, script and scenario sucks. Characters do battle with the living dead, then seem to ignore the fact that their sick friends are ice cold, have no pulse, sport festering oozing sores and yet still live. Hello! Kill them before they bite your tired ass! The film is framed by an annoying "soul brother" DJ who serves as narrator and commentator on the action. He spins shitty phony bootie shakin' disco that the under-siege survivors inexplicably find time to groove on. What ever.

Now, the good stuff. These zombies are wild and unpredictable. En masse, they shuffle along like typical lazy-lidded Fulci ghouls and then strike like rabid cobras when they close in for the kill. They can swim, they can jump. They hide in strange places. They wield machetes and they know kung fu! In one pleasantly berserk scene, a man opens a refrigerator only to find a flying zombie head that proceeds to eat his throat. In another, a woman is pushed into a hot spring by a cruel ghoul, only to have her legs chewn off by a horde of aquatic zombs.

Still another finds a chick getting her face shoved into the birthing crotch of an infected mom to be; the full-grown spawn that springs forth and squishes is truly disgusting. The gore effects are more than passable and very messy. The body count is high, the pacing brisk and there are freakin' zombies EVERYWHERE!

Comparisons to *Return of the Living Dead* go beyond the basic plot McGuffin. Entire chunks of dialogue are lifted, including the "Let me eat your brain" bit. Ah well. If you can deal with this stroke of plagiarism and

the utter stupidity of the lame-brained script, there's a lot of undead fun to be had. Warmed-over Fulci is still Fulci. Let's put the onus for idiocy on the consistently awful Mattei and let old man Lucio's legacy rest in pieces.

Shriek Show's restored cut and paste anamorphic print is pretty good, if a little washed out, and there are some decent interviews with Mattei and the still-stunning

Marina Loi. Also included is a new audio commentary by the long dead Fulci – kidding! Just seeing if you were paying attention.

Chris Alexander

MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS

HITCH-HIKE COLLECTOR'S EDITION DVD 1977

Starring Franco Nero, Corinne Clery and David Hess

Directed by Pasquale Festa Campanile

Written by Ottavio Jemma, Aldo Crudo and Pasquale Festa Campanile

Anchor Bay Entertainment

Wes Craven's gritty debut feature *The Last House on the Left* proved irresistible to Italian exploitation filmmakers, fuelling short-lived and narrowly defined sub-genre known as the terror film in the late '70s. Terror films are a combination of the crime film and the rape/revenge film, minus the significant elements of both genres. Here, there is much crime, but no police presence. Sexual humiliation and assault are integral components, but neither the rape nor the revenge



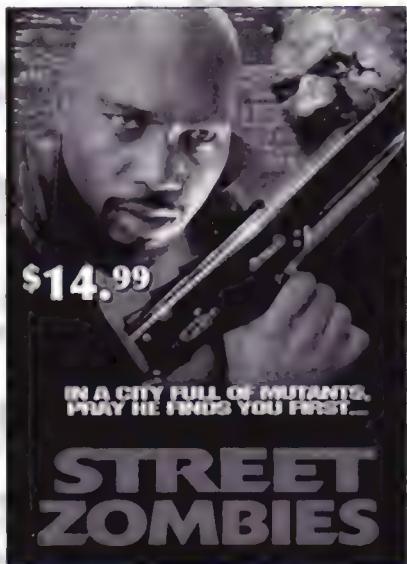
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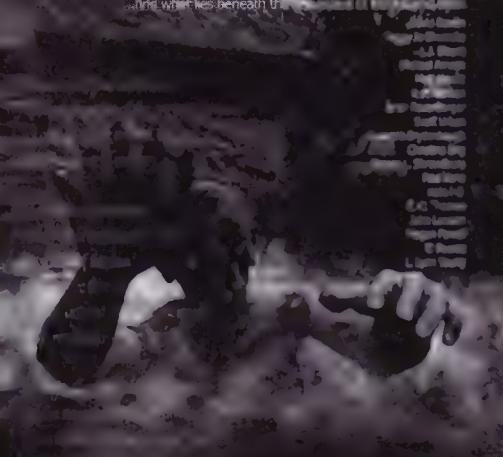
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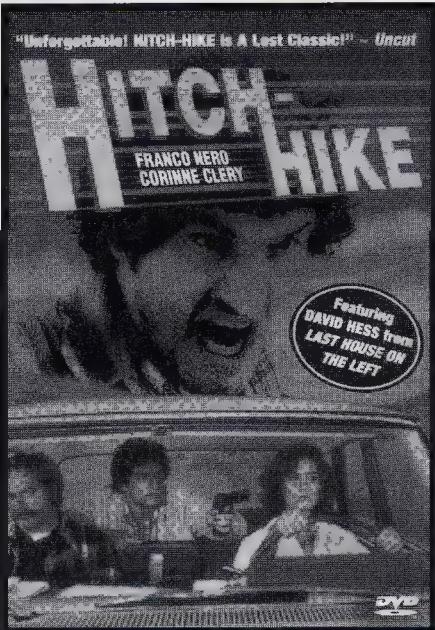
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juxtaposing the sweaty confines of the car against the desolate desert of the American Southwest (or the hills outside of Rome, as is the case here), to underscore Walter and Eve's isolation. Hess reprises the classic bastard he played in *Last House* and his tense interaction with the cranky Nero provides the bulk of the film (Hess may not, in fact, be the biggest bastard in the car). Extras include a theatrical trailer and a featurette containing interviews with the three stars. Anchor Bay is to be commended for continuing to lay waste to the bootleg market.

Gore-met

THE WILD, WILD EAST

FUDOH: THE NEXT GENERATION DVD 1996

Starring Shosuke Tanihara, Kenji Takano and Marie Jinno

Directed by Takashi Miike

Written by Toshiyuki Morioka

Tokyo Shock

aspects are the crux of the terror story. Instead, the terror film pits desperate and cruel men against victims that are often as desperate and cruel, with a focus on the psychological battle between captor and captives. The best-known example of the terror film is Ruggero Deodato's *House on the Edge of the Park* (*La casa sperduta nel parco*, 1980), but the movie regarded as the masterpiece of the genre is Campanile's *Hitch-hike* (*Autostop rosso sangue*). All three films share the silver screen's most magnificent bastard: David Hess.

Walter Mancini (Nero) is a bitter, washed-up newspaper reporter who subjects his lovely wife (Clery) to almost constant drunken abuse. While driving through the Nevada desert, Eve picks up a hitchhiker in a moment of defiance. Their new passenger, Adam (Hess), is a sadistic prison escapee on the lam from both the cops and his accomplices after a daring robbery that gives him two million reasons to get to the Mexican border. From behind the barrel of the gun, Adam engages Walter in a hyper-macho battle of wills, Eve the pliant pawn of both men. As the car gets ever closer to the border, all three look for a way out of a situation that can only have a tragic outcome.

Hitch-hike is a pristine presentation in the original 1.85:1 aspect ratio. This is a film that takes full advantage of the wide screen,

Before disturbing audiences with films like *Audition* (1999) and *Visitor Q* (2001), director Takashi Miike first showcased his adversity to restraint with the bizarre, bloody, more over-the-top-than-thou *Fudoh*. Although not a horror film by strict standards, *Fudoh* deserves recognition within the genre for its sheer gory perversity.

Fudoh: The Next Generation is in some ways a send-up of the classic Yakuza film and the theme of high school violence. At a young age, Riki Fudoh witnesses the murder of his older brother at the hands of his own father, who carries out the deed in order to appease his angry Yakuza bosses. Fudoh grows up as a devilishly handsome, deceivingly clean-cut leader of his own team of high school assassins. His peers: a couple of school girls (one with a large machine gun, the other fires deadly darts from a metal tube stuck in her vagina – you read that right), two grade school boys who hide automatic weapons in their stuffed animals, and a giant professional wrestler type who kills people in pretty much any way he wants. Their goal is to eradicate the old Yakuza order, replacing them with a younger generation of killers.

Like other Japanese offerings before it (notably *Battle Royale*), *Fudoh* offers an

overtly nihilistic view of Japanese society, one in which the tension between the generations has escalated to brutal violence. Miike offers some of the most ridiculous scenes of gore and perversion, including killer coffee that turns one man into a fountain of blood and grue, children gunning down elder statesmen, and a hermaphrodite sex scene. Even if Yakuza films are not your thing, *Fudoh* comes recommended to anyone with a taste for "extreme" horror – it is to the Japanese gangster movie what *Ricky-O* was to the kung fu flick.

Unfortunately Tokyo Shock's DVD is pretty much as low as it gets. This thing doesn't even have scene access menus, let alone any significant extras. Picture quality is similarly cheap with washed-out colours and an overall VHS feel. Subtitled.

Aaron Lupton

THE REASON THE PAUSE BUTTON WAS INVENTED

TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER DVD (1976)

Starring Christopher Lee, Richard Widmark and Nastassja Kinski

Directed by Peter Sykes

Written by Christopher Wicking, John Peacock and Gerald Vaughan-Hughes

Based on the novel by Dennis Wheatley
Anchor Bay Entertainment

Until now, I had only a vague memory of seeing this film years ago with an old girlfriend. As I recall, she was quite taken with it while I remained largely unimpressed until that totally gratuitous bit at the very end when Nastassja Kinski got naked. Of course, back in those dark pre-digital days perverts such as myself (and probably most of this publication's male readership) who wished to savour this delicious moment longer than the actual nine allotted seconds had to settle for pausing a VHS tape, usually resulting in a grainy and jumpy image that just wasn't much fun to look at. In DVD World, on the

 REISSUES Continues on page 44...



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INDIE TERROR FEST!

I'LL BURY YOU TOMORROW

Written and directed by Alan Rowe Kelly
New Millennium Pictures Ltd.
Contact: alanrowekelly@erols.com

An undisputedly indie feel may pervade this feature, but *I'll Bury You Tomorrow* soars over its budgetary restraints to come across as a polished piece of horror filmmaking. It tells the tale (straight out of the horror pulps) of what happens when an assortment of very sick people come together at a funeral home, but the story's all in the telling and this one's not only twisted, it's got some twists. Necrophilia, corpse robbing, drugs, live burials and, of course, murder so sweet are all squeezed into 120 minutes, with room to spare. Competently acted, sparsely scored, professionally shot with some great special effects on its side, *I'll Bury You Tomorrow* has already snagged ten nominations and three awards at film festivals across North America. *Rue Morgue* says: if you've lost faith in independent movies, this is the one that's going to win it back. Writer/director Alan Rowe Kelly is a natural; the first one to give him a budget, wins!

Emma Anderson

HATRED OF A MINUTE

Directed by Michael Kallio
Darkart Entertainment
Contact: DarKallio@aol.com

Bruce Campbell acts as executive producer on this Michigan-lensed independent film that stars writer/director Michael Kallio as Eric, the victim of a lifetime of abuse at the hands of his sadistic, alcoholic father (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*'s Gunnar Hansen). Now a grown man, Eric is

forced to contend with the demons of his past, constantly torn between the forces of good and evil, represented here as an angel and a monstrous fiend. When his mother suddenly dies, Eric's madness takes on murderous impulses. Although suffering from some mediocre plot and character development, *Hatred of a Minute* boasts creative camera work, solid atmosphere and strong performances all around. Campbell obviously recognized a winner when he saw one; *Hatred of a Minute* is one of the more engaging independent horror films to come along in some time.

Aaron Lupton

BINGE AND PURGE

Written and directed by Brian Clement
Frontline Films
Contact: frontline@pacificcoast.net

From Brian Clement, creator of the highly praised *Meat Market* and *Meat Market 2*, comes this thoughtful, well-crafted independent gore film. Set in a post-9/11 fascist state, *Binge and Purge* focuses on a trio of special agents, deemed expendable by their superiors, who are called in to investigate a series of gruesome murders. The culprits are none other than a group of fashion models, who take their titular eating disorder to gory lengths by seducing men and then (literally) eating them alive.

Clement shows superior direction and production value (you could never guess this thing was made for \$16,000 Canadian) and leaves the viewer with a lasting impression. Even if the metaphor of the film is lost on you, the effect is undeniable – Clement perfectly contrasts the beauty of the models with lengthy, repulsive scenes of cannibalism.

Aaron Lupton

I'll Bury You Tomorrow: Alan Rowe Kelly's indie thriller soars high above the competition (all pictures left).

Necropolis Awakened



Necropolis Awakened: Indie madness pits *Pulp Fiction* against *Day of the Dead* and forges fine wine from ass sweat.

P.O.V

Directed by Michael Baker & Brian McKechnie
Sick & Twisted Productions
Contact: pov@sickandtwistedonline.com

When money is in short supply, imagination goes a long way. Writer/co-director Michael James Baker managed to (mostly) retain my interest thanks to a plot conceit (some might say gimmick) which compelled me to bear with the film until the unrealistic end. The plot: five young housemates sit around their living room discussing sex, violence and Rachel, the tenant they all hold a grudge against. The conceit: the story unfolds from the successive points of view (i.e. P.O.V.) of each character. One by one, we see their hidden torments, inner desires and sick minds as they build up to "punishing" Rachel for "controlling" their lives. It's an intriguing idea but inherently limited. The same events unfold five times, which means that much of the action and dialogue is repeated. That's annoying. Baker tries to stop us from hitting fast-forward by inserting visual effects that comment on each character's mental state. This doesn't work and most plainly betrays the film's "student" roots. But *P.O.V.*'s biggest problem is its characters. Everyone is annoying in that special way only twenty-somethings who don't know shit about shit can be. Everyone is selfish and petty and deserves a slap. In fact, the "annoying" Rachel is *P.O.V.*'s most sympathetic character. Kudos to Baker for a not entirely noxious debut, the only way is up.



Sean Plummer

NECROPOLIS AWAKENED

Written and directed by Garrett White
Hudson Productions
Contact: hudsonpr@hudsonpro.com

Having carved an impression with *Monster* (see RM#28), a gory seventeen-minute modern re-imagining of the Frankenstein tale, Duke, Garrett and Brandon White up the ante on *Necropolis Awakened*, their first ballistic stab at the world of feature filmmaking. Unleashed at the Seattle Northwest Film Forum as part of their new Cult Cinema series, *NA* centres around Skyhook Oregon, a small desert community upset by the arrival of shady bio-technology firm Neo-Genetrix. When townsfolk start developing a taste for human flesh, it's up to former war hero "Bob" to uncover the secret of Nefarious Thorne, the lip-less (but ultimately smooth talking) leader of a small army of genetically enhanced undead. Shot for under \$10,000 (US) with an entire cast/crew of – count 'em – four people, the boys at Hudson have once again managed to forge fine wine from ass-sweat, and my horror hat goes off to their "brain-damaged *Pulp Fiction* meets *Day of the Dead*" presentation. In an encouraging turn of events, expect to find *Necropolis Awakened* on Blockbuster and other major outlet shelves this March, next to the latest Hollywood horror sleeping pills. From there, the choice is all yours.

Tom Dragomir

BLOOD ON THE BACKLOT

Directed by Michelle Deal
Real Deal Productions
Contact: arealdeal@earthlink.net

Director Michelle Deal's film *Blood on the Backlot* is a 22-minute ode to 1940s Hollywood, unquestionably a lush production, shot beautifully in black and white with a very expensive camera. But *Backlot* – which aspires to the film noir, horror, and comedy genres of the golden age – delivers little more than clichés of all three. It begins with the murder of a bitter Hollywood starlet (Stevens), who's given each of the suspects on the lot plenty of motive to do her in (taking for granted that professional jealousy and name-calling are acceptable motives for murder in Hollywood). Soon everyone is rounded up and interrogated by homicide detective John Waddington (Billingsley), who, like the audience, has to endure the recounting of each suspect's doings leading up to the murder. The twist in the script is that, rather than simply a murderer, it might very well be a werewolf on the loose. Werewolves, murder, and mystery are king; but that's where the good bits come to an end. What Deal has amassed is a cast of characters who speak not in the quick-witted tongues of the classics, but with the annoying one-liners and silly facial expressions usually reserved for friends and family members who are kind enough to act for free. If you find yourself jonesing for a dark-and-stormy-night of comical whodunit set in period costume, you'd be better off playing *Clue*.

David Dupont

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release of *TTDAD*. Here, cast, crew and film historians candidly discuss the studio's final years and how this particular film finally nailed the coffin shut.

Christopher Lee's biographer Jonathan Sothcott blames the state of affairs on Hammer becoming bloated and complacent in the wake of its tremendous success in previous decades: "The basic Hammer product didn't change between 1957 and 1972. When you had films like *Night of the Living Dead*, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Exorcist*, those are the films that Hammer should have been making a year before Hollywood. That's how they got big in the fifties, that's how they should have continued. But they got lazy." The cast and crew also detail the scheduling and script problems – the film was being rewritten daily right up to the end of production – that doubtless contributed to the end product being such a disjointed mess. And they sure as hell don't mince words about what a monumental prick Widmark was; director Sykes relates the story of the film's sole American actor getting into an on-set brawl with an electrician who had the unmitigated nerve to ask him for a light.

The usual trailers and stills are also included, but let's not kid ourselves – it'll be a while before most of you take the damn thing off pause to get to any of these extras anyway.

John Bowen

GRINDHOUSE GOODNESS

LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET DVD (1973)

Starring Roger Watkins, Ken Fisher, Kathy Curtin

Written and directed by Roger Watkins

Barrel Entertainment

Routinely described as the most vile and disgusting film ever made, Roger Watkins' *Last House on Dead End Street* also holds the distinction of being the cheapest ("Not a dollar was spent on it," stated the legendary director when interviewed by *Headpress*' David Kerekes). Aficionados of like-minded trash auteurs like H.G. Lewis and Andy Milligan will no doubt see that this doesn't mean a thing – in fact, the lack of budget probably makes the movie all the more entertaining. It's part and parcel with the charm of grindhouse cinema, the clandestine thrill of midnight slumming in a scum-

infested, condom-strewn theatre on 42nd street. And now it's on DVD so you don't even have to risk your life watching it.

In *Dead End Street*, director Watkins himself stars as Terry Hawkins, a down-and-out pornographer loosely based on Charlie Manson. Fresh out of the clink and disgusted by the world around him, Terry decides to do something about it by making "something new, something nobody's ever seen before," targeting the very society that put him away. He quickly meets up with several young psychopaths willing to join him in producing a ritualistic snuff film, and his cinematic quest is fulfilled ad nauseam.

Last House on Dead End Street harbors all the elements of successful exploitation for its time, with scenes of unbridled violence, torture and gore, heartily peppered with nudity and sex, and while it's as ugly as one might expect, the film is not without artistry and meaning. Watkins comes through like a bat out of hell with wild, inspired direction and one helluva scary, convincing performance – there's nothing cheesy about this shocker, a hard sucker-punch to the senses that will leave you dazed for hours afterward. It's like a mad cross between *Two Thousand Maniacs!* and *Charlie's Family* whacked on acid. You don't have to like it, but you do have to appreciate it.



Barrel Entertainment has given *Last House on Dead End Street* its golden jubilee with this release, a two-disc set overflowing with extra goodness. Highlights include commentary with Watkins and horror journalist Chas Balun, four early, never-before-seen short films by the director, a Necrophagia tribute video helmed by underground icon Jim Van Bebber, a deluxe 36-page booklet by David Kerekes, even 70-plus minutes of behind-the-scenes phone calls detailing the making of the film! Even if you hate the movie this is still one tempting package, one of the most impressive genre discs of the year.

Nathan Tyler

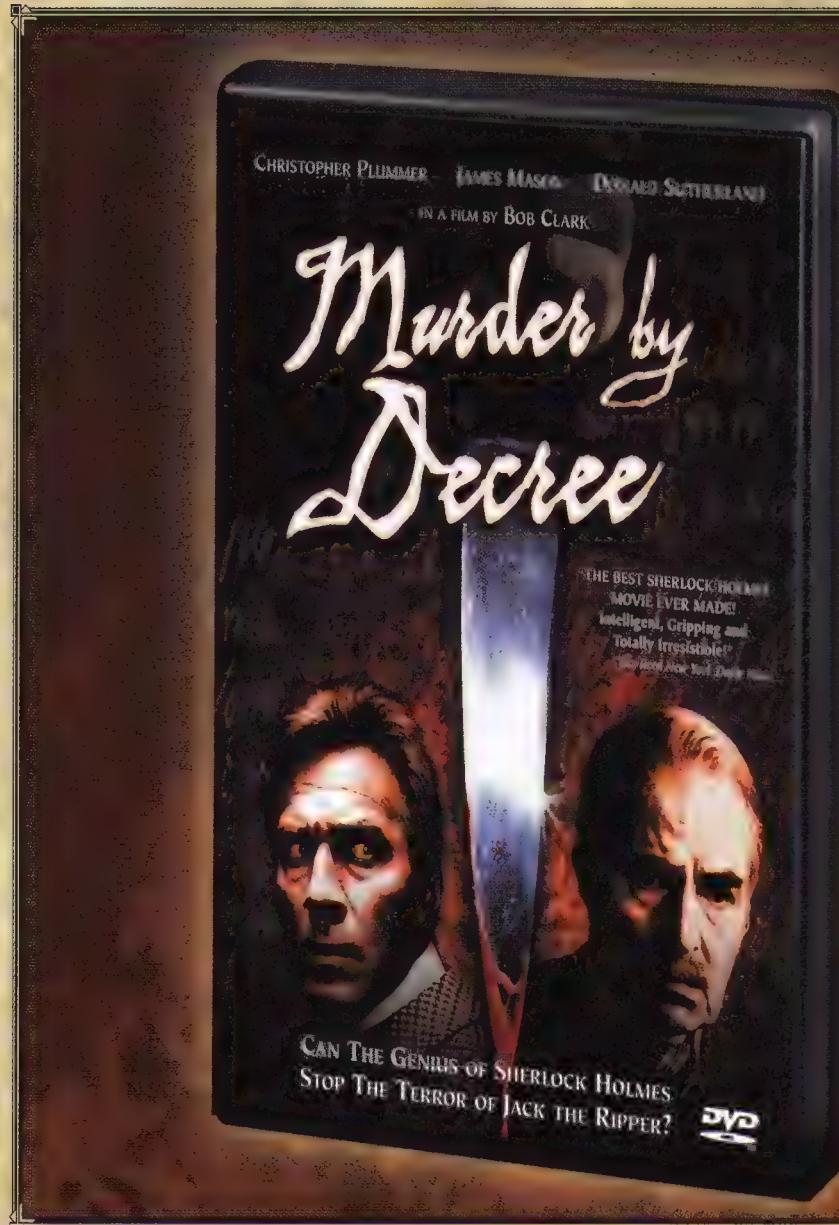
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MORE GHOSTS FROM THE EAST!

THE HAUNTED LANTERN DVD 1997

Starring Gitan Otsuru, Yuuna Natsuo

and Junna Suzuki

Directed by Masaru Tsushima

Written by Yuka Honcho

Asia Pulp Cinema/Central Park Media

A few bloody deaths, some skin, maybe some low-rent makeup effects these are the staples that an undemanding fan of J-horror expects, not a powerful meditation on the power of love based on a centuries-old legend.

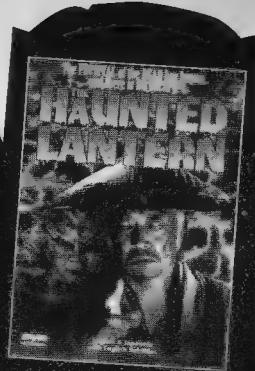
But it's this very confounding of expectations that makes *The Haunted Lantern* such a delight. It's based on the old story of Shinzaburo and Otsuyu, lovers kept apart by their families' different social statuses. Forbidden to see her love, the heartbroken Otsuyu becomes ill and dies; her nurse Oyone passes away soon after. Unaware of their deaths, Shinzaburo is delighted when Otsuyu and Oyone visit him, and he and Otsuyu become lovers. Only later does Shinzaburo learn that the two women are actually ghosts. Terrified, Shinzaburo places Buddhist scriptures on his door to keep out the phantoms but is betrayed when a neighbour destroys the talismans. Shinzaburo is then killed by the ghostly Otsuyu for his faithlessness.

Itself based on a Chinese tale, this traditional ghost story (or "kaidan") was most famously written down by Sanyutei Encho (1839-1900) in his story *Botan Doro*. More than seven Japanese films have been inspired by it, most infamously Chusei Sone's "romantic porno" *Hellish Love* (1972). Director Masaru Tsushima here focuses on the romantic elements of the original story, spicing it up with low-budget computer effects and impressive makeup.

In *The Haunted Lantern*, Shinzaburo (Gitan Otsuru) is a shiftless young man determined to abandon his samurai upbringing to become an artist. Tsuyu (Yuuna Natsuo) falls in love with him but Shin's father wants him to marry Suza (Junna Suzuki), Tsuyu's younger sister, who also falls for the disaffected young man. Disconsolate over their shared love, the sisters commit suicide and attempt to win over Shin as ghosts. Thus is the romantic triad set up.

Just as the original story has its roots in China, Tsushima seems inspired by Chinese filmmakers like Ching Sui-Tung (*A Chinese Ghost Story*) and Ronny Yu (*The Bride With The White Hair*), especially during the blind Buddhist priest's battle with the airborne ghost Suza. But it's Tsuyu's true love for Shin that provides the film's heart. When Shin rejects Tsuyu for her ghostly ugliness, her heart breaks, and we realize that Shin never really loved Tsuyu. It's both frightening and sad, and it's this mix of high-energy filmmaking and tragedy which makes *The Haunted Lantern* a poignant and unexpected delight. Seek it out.

Sean Plummer



COULD HAVE BEEN A

CONTENDER

DEMONESS COLLECTOR'S EDITION DVD 1995

Starring Glynn Beard, Lorena Gutierrez and Enca Owens

Directed by Glynn Beard

Written by Margaret Francis

Shock-O-Rama Cinema

Demoness would have made a great segment in an anthology film. The basic story is a classic EC comics-style shocker, and director/star Beard constructs some impressive eye candy almost out of place in a film with such small aspirations, but alas, there just isn't enough voltage to get the monster off the table.

Jilted Jim is an obsessive sort who won't let a little acrimony ruin his relationship with his beloved Theresa. He seeks out the aid of a wizened old gypsy, who sells him a bottle of enchanted perfume that will forever place him in a Vaseline-smeared medium shot in the eyes of the woman who despises him. Jim begins to discover he may have got more than he bargained for when Theresa becomes a doting love zombie. Hopelessly entwined in their coupleness, they invite Theresa's brother and some of his friends for a weekend-long reaffirmation of their commitment to each other. Cue the fodder. Cue the vengeful spirit of a woman brutally murdered 200 years before. Cue the gore.

Two major problems undermine this film: there isn't enough meat in the story to carry an almost feature-length movie. Clocking in at a mere 72 minutes, *Demoness* is watery gruel with few interesting moments in it. The nine minutes of end credits are indicative of the kind of padding at hand and a clumsy script compounds the lack of material. People given little else to do but die horrible deaths spend most of their screen time making awkward and interminable declarations of eternal love to their significant others. Viewers not bludgeoned senseless by this heavy-handed mush will be treated to some brief but satisfying gore sequences, like the decapitation-by-tongue!

Shock-O-Rama Cinema specializes in low-budget films and, as such, delivers big bang for the buck. The DVD presentation of *Demoness* (originally entitled *The Crier*) is excellent. Included in the extras are the full contents of the Y2K: *Shutdown Detected* VHS tape (see RM#19). The two dozen titty trailers Shock-O-Rama includes on all their discs round out the extras.

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SHE'S A SUCKER

MY VAMPIRE LOVER

Starring Paige Richards, Misty Mundae and Darian Caine
Written and directed by George Freeway
Seduction Cinema



I realize that I probably should lower my standards if I am to be a fair judge of soft-core movies, but having seen some pretty decent ones I guess I simply can't give *My Vampire Lover* the kind of kindness it supposedly deserves. This movie is one of Seduction Cinema's run-of-the-mill offerings with a skeletal script designed to merely move the girls from one sex scene to another. But since the sex is patently fake, maybe they should add a bit more, ahem, meat to the script. And a little suspense wouldn't hurt either.

On the plus side I have to say that the star of the show, Paige Richards, saves this vehicle from being relegated to my shit list. Lovely Paige giggles throughout the movie and delivers her lines like she's reading the contents off a soup can – can't say it wasn't entertaining.

Paige plays Monique, a vampire in search of a female soulmate in the town of Hooterville (*finally, a porn movie that's based on a true story! -Ed.*). But her true soulmate must survive her vampiric bite, all the while the body count escalates as Monique keeps the police guessing (along with the local peeping tom).

My Vampire Lover also stars Seduction Cinema's top stars Misty Mundae and Darian Caine as two hapless victims writhing in the naked pleasure of pain. Overall, the sex scenes are alright and you'll land yourself a pretty decent lap dance in the extras section but, beyond that, *My Vampire Lover* is a sucker and no, that ain't a good thing.

Inna Cent

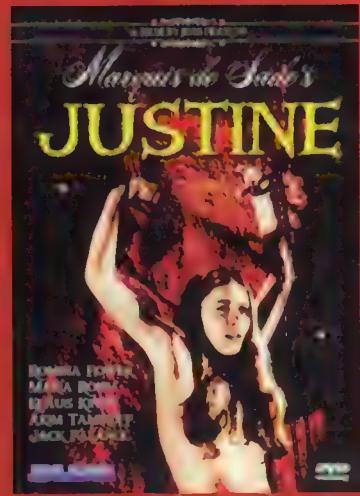
PERVERTS UNITE!

MARQUIS DE SADE'S JUSTINE DVD 1968

Starring Romina Power, Maria Rohm and Klaus Kinski
Directed by Jess Franco
Written by Harry Allen Towers

EUGENIE DVD 1969

Starring Marie Liljedahl, Jack Taylor and Maria Rohm
Directed by Jess Franco
Written by Harry Allen Towers
(as Peter Welbeck)
Blue Underground



His writing is unfilmable as written, but that hasn't stopped moviemakers worldwide from being inspired by his life and his work. No doubt it was that challenge (and the potential for profit) that inspired B-movie producer Harry Allen Towers to hire vision-hack Jess Franco to direct these adaptations of the Marquis de Sade's work.

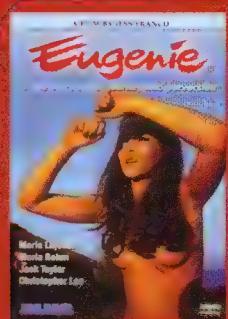
Let's start with the lesser of the two. *Justine* (1968) finds old Hollywood star Tyrone Powers' nubile and untalented teenage daughter Romina cast as the titular heroine. Justine and her older sister Juliette (Towers' then girlfriend Rohm) are cast out of the French convent in which they are being raised after their father is forced to flee the country and their mother is killed. While the worldly Juliette chooses to take refuge in a brothel, her innocent younger sister depends upon the kindness of strangers to see her through. This being de Sade, Justine finds herself used and abused by priests, nobles and madmen, before finally being rescued by her sister, now a nobleman's wife thanks to a career of theft and murder. Safe after more than two hours of cinematic abuse, the uncorrupted Justine lives happily ever after with the only man who every really loved her, a handsome young artist, while her now rich sister admits to leading a luxurious but empty life. Fade out.

Where do I start? Franco has a penchant for capturing erotic and beautiful images as if by chance. The fact that he's working with beautiful women, beautiful architecture (several of the Barcelona-filmed exteriors feature the surreal work of Antonio Gaudi) and inspired actors (including Orson Welles regular Mercedes McCambridge, a drunken Jack Palance, and a dour Klaus Kinski as the Marquis), and the largest budget of his career means that, untalented as Franco is, it's impossible for *Justine* to be a complete waste.

But the film's biggest liability, as revealed in the DVD's amusing documentary *The Perils And Pleasures of Justine*, is Romina Powers. Foisted on Franco by his producer, Powers simply did not have the dedication or the talent to portray Justine as she was conceived – as an innocent who learns to revel in her corruption. Instead, Powers' inability to act forced Franco to maintain Justine's innocence, from beginning to end.

B-movie nymphet Marie Liljedahl had no such problems. Equally artless but sexier, her talent, as limited as it may be, allowed her to portray Eugenie's complete character arc, from innocence to corruption.

1969's *Eugenie* (subtitled "the story of her journey into perversion") is based on de Sade's *Philosophy In The Bedroom*, a dia-



logue which traces the wilful corruption of the innocent Eugenie by her "friend," the Madame de Saint-Ange, her brother, and the notorious libertine Dolmancé. Rohn returns as the Madame, while Jack Taylor plays Mirvel (the brother).

Considerably more chaste in his characterization but just as sinister, Christopher Lee, *dapper in a red velvet smoking jacket, pops up* in the cameo role of Dolmancé.

Here, Eugenie is taken to an island paradise by Saint-Ange, who has seduced the girl's father into giving his daughter over to her. There, she is initiated into a world of pain and pleasure where the borders between what is and is not acceptable have been eliminated. But this philosophically ideal world was opposed to the ultimate morality of conventional society, quickly reveals itself to be all about cruelty, torment and selfishness as Mirvel and Saint-Ange vie for Eugenie, leading to her ultimate destruction.

Genuinely disturbing, *Eugenie* makes for compelling viewing, partly for Liljedahl and Rohn's uninhibited nude scenes but primarily for the unbridled evil of the adults surrounding the young innocent. Mirvel and Saint-Ange drug, rape, torture and otherwise humiliate their young charge in a fugue of degradation which quickly reveals their own amorality. Broken down psychologically and morally by her elders, Eugenie is stripped bare, both literally and figuratively. To Liljedahl's credit, she carries off her transformation from precocious innocent to devastated adult with élan.

The accompanying documentary, *Perversion Stories*, features informative interviews with Liljedahl, Franco, Towers and, notably, Lee, who makes it clear that he had no idea exactly what kind of film he was getting himself into (his scenes were filmed over just two days) but remains admiring of his director's talent, despite the mild deception. *Anthony Ferrante*, Lee's legacy, calls *Eugenie* the film he "hates the least." Can't argue that.

Sean Plummer

SEXY 'N' WEIRD

THE NAKED WITCH DVD 1961

Starring Robert Short, Jo Maryman, and Denis Adams
Directed by Larry Buchanan
Written by Claude Alexander and Larry Buchanan

CRYPT OF DARK SECRETS DVD 1976

Starring Ronald Tanet, Maureen Ridly, and Herb Jahncke
Written and directed by Jack Weis
Something Weird Video

From everyone's favourite home for bizarre, sur-really bad schlock films comes this double dose of supernatural nudie flicks. Something Weird has unearthed two forgotten classicks and added an extras package that could make Anchor Bay look like cheapskates.

Shot in Texas, cult director Larry (Zontar the Thing From Venus) Buchanan's *Naked Witch* tells the tale of a young man who accidentally resurrects "The Luckenbach Witch" while researching the Salem witch trials for a college paper.

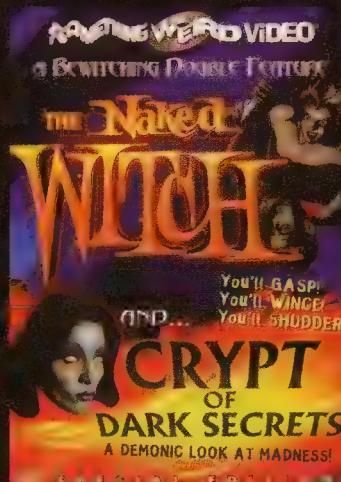
Wrongly accused of witchcraft and put to death, the Luckenbach Witch walks the countryside in the nude (with black dots over all the right places) preying on those who took her life. The acting is hilariously wooden, the shots are about as creative as a grocery cart, and the only reason that you can tell it is supposed to take place at night is the sound of crickets in an otherwise bright and sunny day. In other words, *The Naked Witch* is entertaining only to the degree of how bad it is, providing viewers with a look at an early form of lowbrow nudie entertainment. An obscure film, *The Naked Witch* is actually based on a German folk legend which served as

source material for a German movie of the same name. As well, Danzig used this little-known cheapie as a song title on his last album, *I Luciferi*.

Fast forwarding 15 years, moving from Texas to the bayou of Louisiana, is Jack (Mardi Gras Massacre) Weis' *Crypt of Dark Secrets*, the second tale (tail?) on Something Weird's bill. Another revenge story, *Crypt* stars Ronald Tanet as Ted, a Vietnam War vet who now resides on a lonely island with only a gorgeous nude witch named Dambella to keep him company. After a gang of robbers leave Ted for dead, Dambella takes it upon herself to aid the vet in gaining revenge. Again impossibly badly acted, *Crypt of Dark Secrets* is easily one of the weirdest pervo-flicks of all time. Shrouded in the atmosphere of the bayou, this movie is actually quite professional looking, and seems to have benefited from this DVD release in terms of picture quality.

Not only will you get two films for the price of one on this DVD, but Something Weird has added a slew of gruesome goodies.

Naked Witch receives audio commentary by director Buchanan as well as an interview with writer/producer Claude Alexander. The bonuses are key finds for obscure Midnight Movie aficionados. Also included are TV spots for both films, trailers for thirteen obscure B-movies, four voodoo ritual shorts, a nudie short, a psychedelic short, a lengthy



gallery of old-school horror comic book art set to the tune of the Dead Elvi (see RM#26), and the 31-minute nudie featurette The Hot Pearl Snatch, now the title of a popular song by The Cramps (not included). That's a total of three and a half hours of hot swampland black magic nekkid entertainment. Pick it up and don't feel lonely this Saturday night!

Aaron Lupton

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TRILOGY OF ERROR

Here's the way it works at *Rue Morgue*, folks: new flicks come in, our own personal Jesus (Rod) puts the word out, you haul ass to the office and grab the gory goods. But boy-o-boy you best get there early, 'cause if you don't, you get your lazy procrastinating self stuck with either a bunch of stank *Leprechaun* re-issues or (gulp) the entire run of the lame-o *Warlock* series! Well, life's all about choices and when the time came to make the call, I figured Ice-T free was the way to go. Here then, for better or worse, is my full, feeble report....

Trimark takes the
Warlock Trilogy to DVD...
er, Murray...?

WARLOCK

Steve (Friday the 13th parts II and III) Miner's *Warlock* was released in the fall of 1991, although if memory serves, it sat on the shelf for a good year. It probably should've stayed there. Telling the tacky tale of a nasty male witch and his time travelling quest for a sort of Satanic

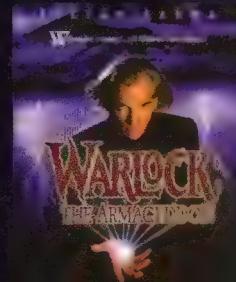


Bible called The Grand Grimoire, *Warlock* was the sort of dopey C-movie that appeals to pre-pubes 10-year-old boys and low IQ'd adults.

As the poncey, ponytailed title fiend, Julian Sands looks like one of the dudes from *Yes* and acts as if he truly believes he is

Shakespeare. Now, this is not necessarily a bad thing; I always prefer my horror – no matter how ludicrous – played straight-up. I'd rather laugh at than with, and for the first reel *Warlock* looks like it might actually be a decent, fun, melodramatic romp. UK actor Richard Grant (*Withnail and I*) is pretty damn good as the witch's nemesis Redferne, and a classic battle of good versus evil begins to play out.

Then the MoFos have to go and travel through time, winding up in the nineties with the absolutely intolerable comic relief of ditzy "modern girl" Lori Singer and BLAMMO, the whole thing goes kamikaze. Miner's sloppy direction doesn't help, neither do the special de-fects, which range from acceptable to awful, sometimes within the same scene! *Warlock* will probably be best remembered as the film that inspired some warped kid in Northern Canada to drink a baby's boiled flesh, hoping it would make him fly like Julian Sands!



WARLOCK: THE ARMAGEDDON

Next, we go out of the frying pan and into the flaming, hemorrhoidal depths of Hades with certifiable genre hack Anthony Hickox's hokey, jokey direct-to-vid gobbler *Warlock: The Armageddon*. Screenwriter David Twohy (who later wrote/directed the really cool sci-fi *Pitch Black*) returns with the further adventures of everyone's favourite Ham from Hell, Julian Sands a.k.a...dun dun DAH: THE WARLOCK!

This sorry sequel scraps the storyline of the first film in favour of a half-assed *Star Wars* riff featuring two teens, descendants of the Druids, whose destiny calls when the he-beast threatens to end the earth. Actually Twohy's script isn't too bad, just way too ambitious for the film's meagre budget. It actually feels as though the Warlock angle was thrown in last minute in order for the producers to attach it to a bankable franchise.

Hickox is so wrong for horror and yet this is apparently all he does. His pop, Douglas Hickox, made a great, entirely successful comedy/horror film in 1973 called *Theatre of Blood* with the late great Vinnie Price, but it seems Hickox junior has been trying to marry the two genres since his first feature *Waxwork*, and fails miserably every time. Indeed, his doofus vampire epic *Sundown* should've sent the punk back to cola commercial inferno and his shitty Freddy Kruegerization of Pinhead in the awful *Hellraiser 3* should've had him shot!

Speaking of *Hellraiser*, listen to the score by Mark McKenzie: Christopher Young, if you're reading this, CALL YOUR LAWYER! Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but being ripped off is tantamount to being kicked in the balls. A few decent gore scenes can't save this goofy, convoluted mess. Use the flipside of the disc as a mirror and check yer head.

WARLOCK 3:

THE END OF INNOCENCE

And this, friends and Romans, leads us to further the *Hellraiser* connection as scream Queen Ashley Laurence – that's right, Kirsty Cotton herself – returns with the worst entry in this or any other series. *Warlock 3: The End of Innocence* is an absolutely unrelated, barely watchable dullard of a sequel that even Julian Sands wouldn't touch.

Instead, we have Bruce Payne (Hickox's *Full Eclipse*... hey, six degrees of Kevin Bacon!) as an evil fellow who dresses like the Warlock, but is actually a devil worshipping goat-demon guy, or some shit. I dunno. I don't care. I'm Warlocked out at this point, people!

Laurence is hotter than ever but still can't act her way out of a wet paper bag. The film is boring, cheap and wayyy too talky with only traces of sex and glimpses of gore. The cover art for this turkey features the attractive young cast huddled together striking "wassup!" poses against a black backdrop. And do you think there's any commentary in sight? I still know what your Warlock did last summer. Who asked for this movie to be made? Give us his address and we promise you, there won't be a *Warlock 4*!

I should've taken those friggin' *Leprechaun* movies! At least that series ends up in Vegas! Snake eyes!

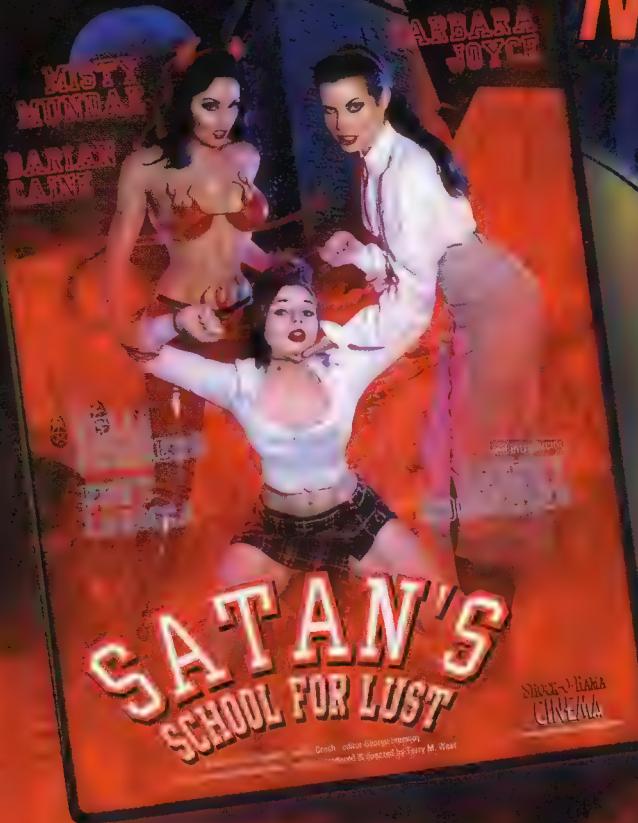
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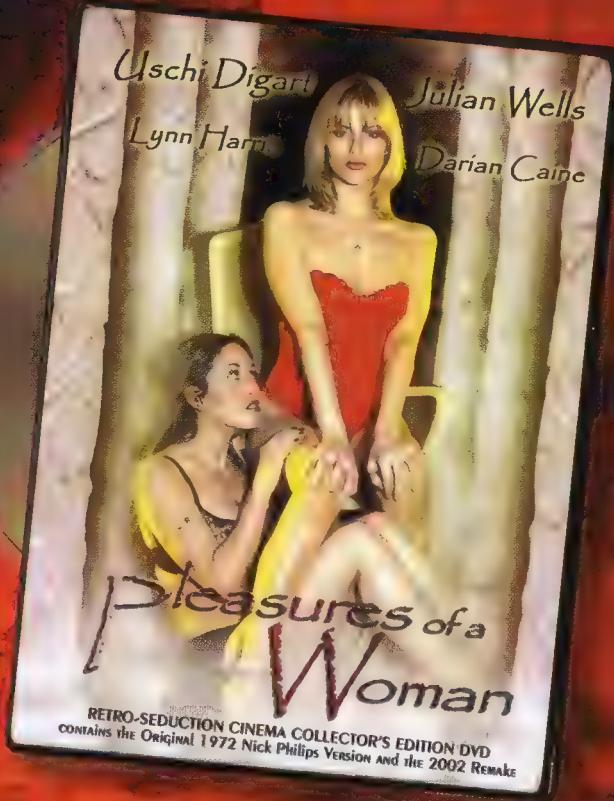
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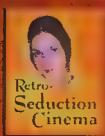
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THE VAMPIRE RERUNS

THE RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE DVD 1943

Starring Bela Lugosi, Frieda Inescort

and Nina Foch

Directed by Lew Landers

Written by Griffin Jay

Columbia TriStar

He was still a decade away from making Ed Wood's *Glen or Glenda?*, but Bela Lugosi's long slide into obscurity had already begun by the time he essayed the tired role of arrogant bloodsucker Armand Tesla in 1943's *The Return of the Vampire*.

Tesla is a 200-year-old Hungarian vampire living and feeding in England in 1918. He is tended to by his werewolf servant Andreas (Matt Willis). His reign of terror ends when a pair of scientists, Lady Jane (Inescort) and Sir John Ainsley (Roland Varno), discover his secret and drive a railroad spike through his heart. His master taken from him and returned to his human

state, Andreas is taken under the wing of Lady Jane, who seemingly breaks Tesla's hold over him.

Fast forward to World War II when a stray Nazi bomb unearths Tesla's tomb. Clean-up workers remove the spike and unwittingly release Tesla

from his imposed slumber, allowing him to reclaim Andreas' soul and continue his nocturnal attacks on Lady Jane's now grown daughter Nikki (Foch).

Comparisons to *Dracula* are inevitable, and Tesla is only a serviceable riff off that classic portrayal. *Vampire*, likewise, is a serviceable fright flick, albeit one without any real frights. This is drawing room horror filled with all the signifiers of spookiness – deep shadows, the far-off howling of dogs, low-lying fog, Lugosi – but bereft

of any real tension. Characters are poorly drawn, dialogue is ripe, and Bela himself is merely adequate. (Far better is his maniacal turn as Dr. Richard Vollin in 1935's Poe-influenced *The Raven*, his first collaboration with director Landers, then known by his real name, Louis Friedlander.) And who thought up the ludicrous idea of making the vampire's servant a werewolf? Sad.

Columbia TriStar's transfer is crisp but the DVD offers no extras aside from two unrelated trailers. Recommended to Lugosi completists only.

Sean Plummer

THROUGH THE PAST, DARKLY

GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS DVD 1956

Starring Raymond Burr, Akihiko Hirata

and Momoko Kochi

Directed by Ishiro Honda and Terry Morse

Written by Takeo Murata and Ishiro Honda

Classic Media/Sony

Context is everything. As a kid, I was entranced by *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*. Already a dinosaur freak (I was the only kid in my Grade 5 class who wanted to grow up to be a paleontologist), the sight of the giant reptilian behemoth crushing post-war Tokyo beneath his massive feet and setting it alight with his radioactive breath was too much for my 10-year-old constitution to bear. Overcome by geek spasms, I collapsed on the cheap shag carpet that covered my family's rec room, involuntarily curling into a ball like a giant potato bug prodded with a pencil.

That's something of a distortion, but then so is *Godzilla*, the



Hollywood-ized version of the Japanese hit *Gojira*, although I wouldn't discover this until years later. You probably know the story. Tokyo's Toho Studios release *Gojira* in 1954 to strong domestic box

office. Hollywood takes notice and decides to license the movie from Toho for American distribution. But *Gojira* wasn't *Rashomon* and director Ishiro Honda wasn't Akira Kurosawa. *Gojira* became *Godzilla*, with much of the original dubbed into English. *Gojira*'s anti-nuclear (and, by implication, anti-American) subtext was expunged, and American director Terry Morse reshot several scenes with actor Raymond Burr playing Steve Martin, an investigative reporter who acts as our eyes and ears as the prehistoric relic is awakened by H-bomb testing and goes on a rampage.

Back to context. Can you go back home again? Is it possible to watch *Godzilla* through the eyes of that 10-year-old would-be paleontologist? Not entirely. Watching the film as an adult, Morse's insertion of Burr as Martin just looks clumsy. ("I'm afraid my Japanese is a little rusty," is Martin's way of getting a companion to translate the goings-on.) Similarly, actress Momoko Kochi's conversations with Burr are conducted with the camera facing him, with the back of some anonymous actress' head representing the absent Kochi.

That said, *Godzilla* remains a fun man-in-a-suit B-movie, a semi-natural classic that deserves a proper special edition DVD, not this bare-bones presentation. We want the historical commentary, making-of doc, still galleries. How about a 2-disc version offering both the original *Gojira* and its American counterpart? Now that might really reinvigorate this grown-up 10-year-old's interest.

Sean Plummer

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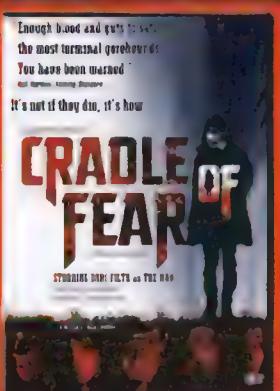
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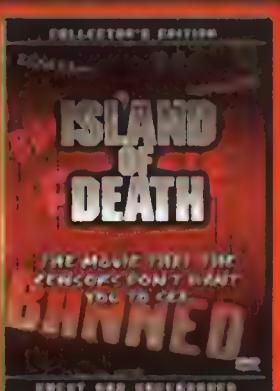
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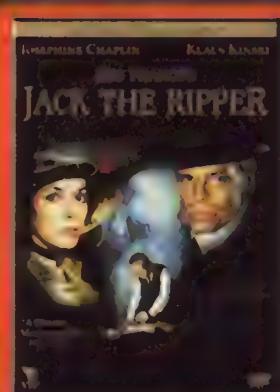
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by Reiber, Turner, Wohl and Manapul Top Cow/Image

IN THE SHADOW OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

by Fuqua, Phillips and Parke DC/Vertigo

SANDMAN PRESENTS: THE FURIES

by Carey and Bolton DC/Vertigo



an illustrated screenplay (it's almost completely dialogue-driven). The equally fascinating layout approach involves blowing up specific panels to act as the backdrop upon which all panels are then placed on that particular page/spread. Familiar for sure, our little @thena – but decidedly different, too.

Now here's an intriguing question: what if Brian Michael Bendis had written *The Matrix*? If your interest is piqued, then *Paradigm* is the new title for you (and at the time of writing, it's still a sleeper). From the opening sequence of issue #1, where reluctant hero-to-be Chris Howells exits a screening of Peter Jackson's *Dead-Alive* and tries to justify the gorefest to his less-than-understanding girlfriend, to the conclusion of issue #2, where police detective Andrew Dreiser creates an actual gorefest in his search for answers regarding... well, that would be telling. Point is: the dialogue's pure Bendis (early Bendis, anyhow); hell, so too is the hyper-frenetic, action and character-driven, black and white art. Get the first pair of *Paradigms* now, and definitely watch this creative team.

A wise person once said that history will teach us nothing. Perhaps the comment was directed at Top Cow's recent



Endgame crossover, given the dubious success of the company's 2001 event, the storyline that introduced the new character "Rapture" into the Witchblade universe. Launched in *Tomb Raider* #25, carried over to *Witchblade* #60 and concluded in *Evo* #1, the new Endgame story is, like its predecessor, another case of great build, gorgeous art – and average writing, plotting that fails to pay off.

Certainly, the kind of clothes-shredding combat that fans of Image's top two adventure heroines have come to expect is here in spades – by the end of part 2, both Lara "Tomb Raider" Croft and Sara "Witchblade" Pezzini have been annexed by the entombed entity known only as "Evo," but only after a spectacular twenty pages per of futile resistance.

But beneath all of the hoopla (Croft, it was long-promised, actually dies in *Tomb Raider* #25; true enough, but we'll take bets on her imminent, less-than-spectacular resurrection), it turns out that the whole storyline is just an excuse for the Cow to relaunch its original superteam, Cyberforce. And as was the case with the company's simultaneous relaunch of *The Darkness* (don't even get me started on how disappointing that was), this event represents yet again the kind



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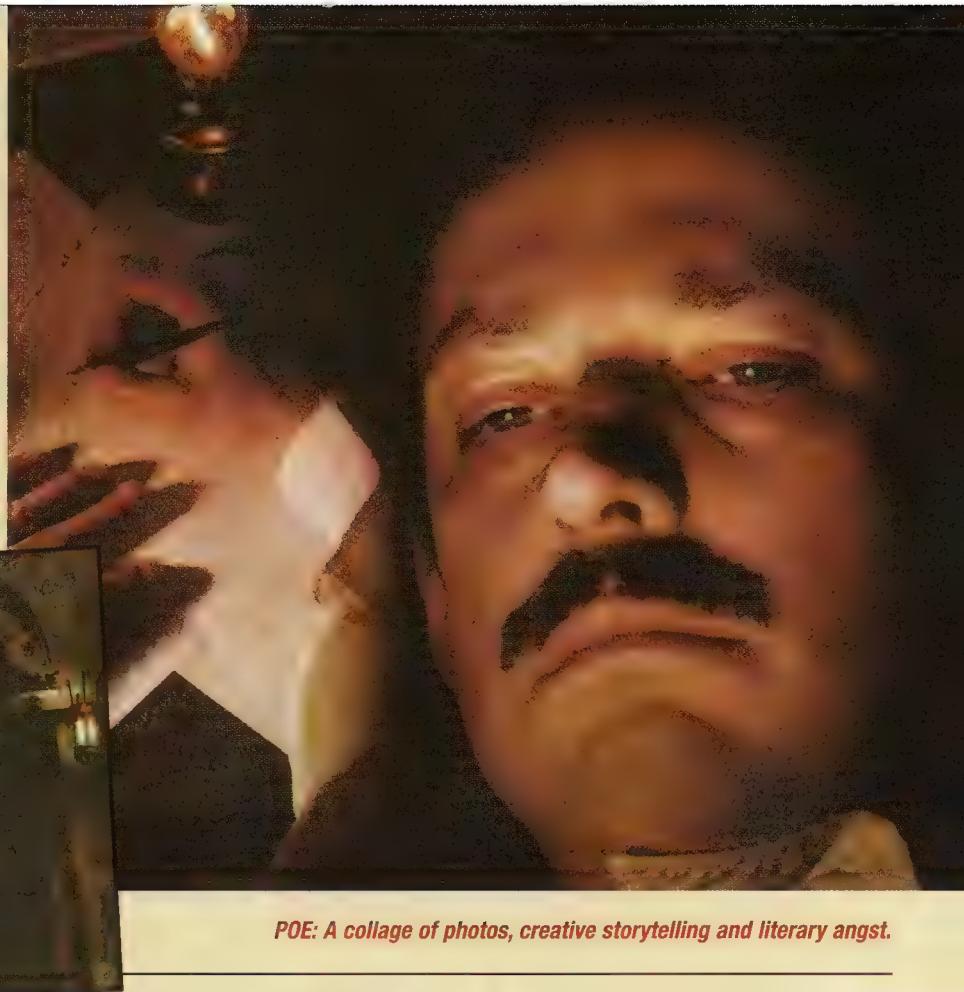


of party that was well-planned, perhaps, but pointless, and that never really gets off the ground.

"Can a wraith inspire a madman? I will accept your offer, for I believe you a figment of my mind!" So speaks the madman, Edgar Allan Poe – possibly to a ghost, possibly to himself – in a bold work of speculative historical fiction released through DC's Vertigo imprint. *In the Shadow of Edgar Allan Poe* is so-titled for a specific reason made apparent only in the story's shocking (albeit inevitable) conclusion. But the gist of this hardcover's clever dual narrative is that Poe kept a diary, which is only discovered in the here and now, 150 years after the self-destructive, alcoholic writer's death, and confidentially entrusted to college professor (and Poe expert) Sterling Tuttle.

The stark and menacing photocover evokes Lovecraftian imagery to great and appropriate effect; appropriate because, inasmuch as the narratives of both the diarist and the scholar accurately echo the paranoid, psychological ramblings of Poe's writing style, the circumstances of this revised autobiography are of the sort that involve conjuring Cthuluesque demons.

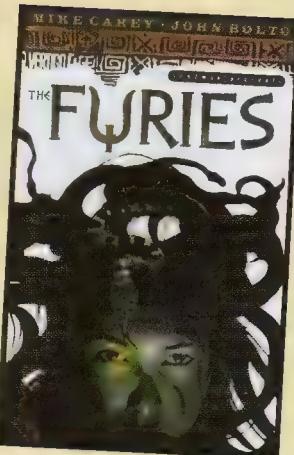
Produced by writer Jonathon Scott Fuqua, photographer Stephen John Phillips and digital illustrator Steven Parke – the team behind *I, Paparazzi* (Rue Morgue's choice for Comic of the Year 2001) – *In the Shadow of Edgar Allan Poe* is an audaciously daring look into the horrific gift of the imagination and the potential price of pure creativity. Executed as a digitally-manipulated photonovel (as was *I, Paparazzi*), the book is particularly effective in both creating a concrete, realistic Poe – played by Damon Norko – and visualizing the tortuous spirit



POE: A collage of photos, creative storytelling and literary angst.

that might or might not exist in his mind.

If you've been disillusioned by recent *Sandman*-approved titles that read more like a wake-up call that the dream is lonnnnng-over, then tapping the indisputable power of The Furies will provide a pleasant release. Scripted by *Hellblazer* and *Lucifer* alum Mike Carey, and (dare I say) dreamily painted by the legendary John Bolton (nightmarishly painted



when necessary, too), this hardcover one-shot essentially picks up the plot thread of the life of Lyta Hall – she who was manipulated into killing Morpheus in the *Sandman* series.

Carey's humane treatment of Hall's confused character – who, understandably, still cannot get over the ritualistic murder of her baby, Daniel – is the key to this satisfying story's success. Given that Daniel became the new Dream King, a reunion of mother and son has been long overdue. In the hands of Carey and Bolton, it's a deserved and memorable event. ☺

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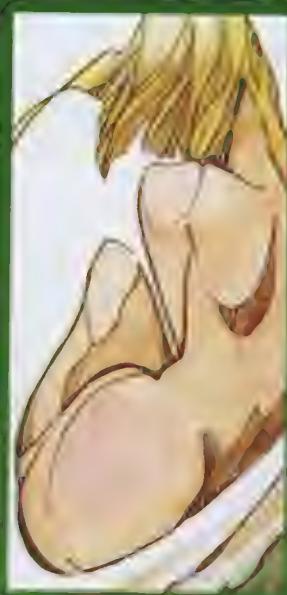
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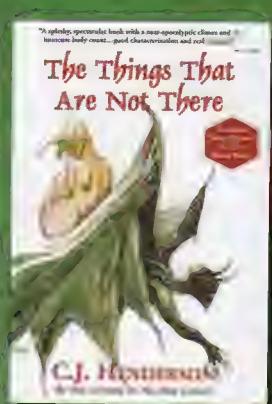
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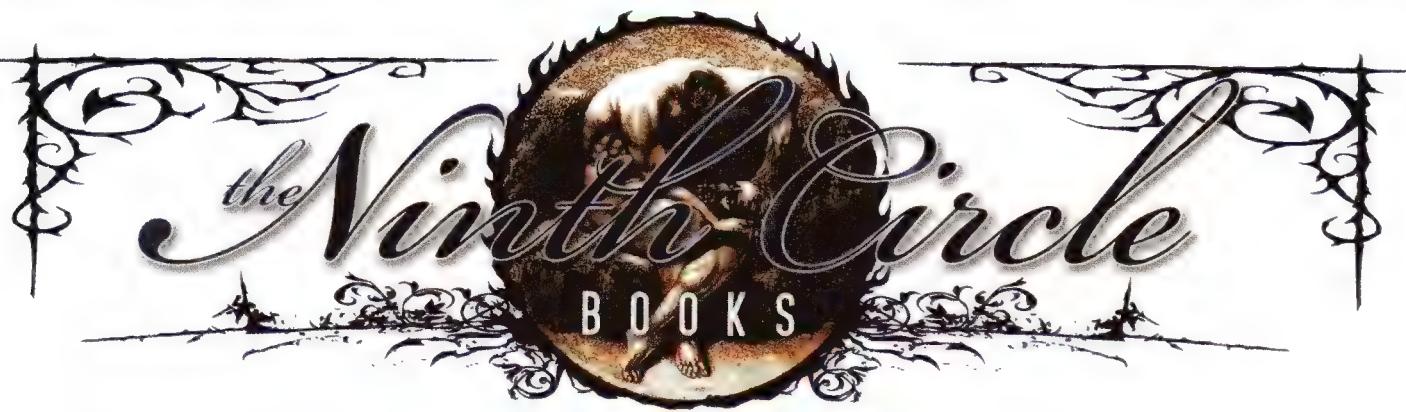
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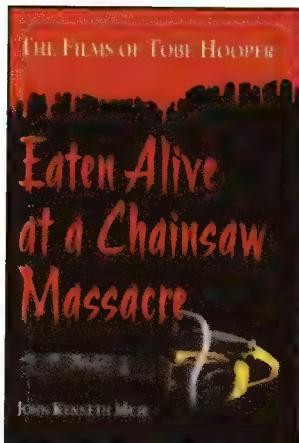


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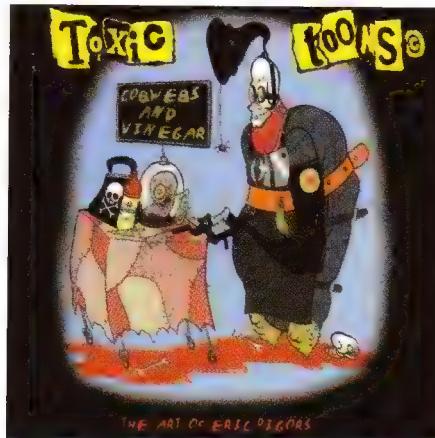


Eaten Alive at a Chainsaw Massacre: The Films of Tobe Hooper

John Kenneth Muir
McFarland & Co.

Of the four biggest names in contemporary American horror cinema – Tobe Hooper, George Romero, John Carpenter and Wes Craven – Hooper is the most problematic subject for critical analysis. Carpenter easily ranks as the most distinctive visual stylist of the bunch; Romero and Craven work best with the big concepts, their films often functioning as social commentary, satire and/or allegory. Hooper, on the other hand, is so stylistically and thematically elusive that his three best films – *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *'Salem's Lot* and *Poltergeist* – would appear to the uninitiated to have been directed by three different people. But John Kenneth Muir (whose mammoth tome *Horror Films of the 1970s* received some well-deserved kudos in our last issue) asserts that plenty of trademarks are present in Hooper's films, even if spotting them requires more than a cursory glance. Muir's talent for identifying patterns among the minutiae (visual, thematic or otherwise) serves him well in this exhaustive critique, because with Hooper, the devil is in the details.

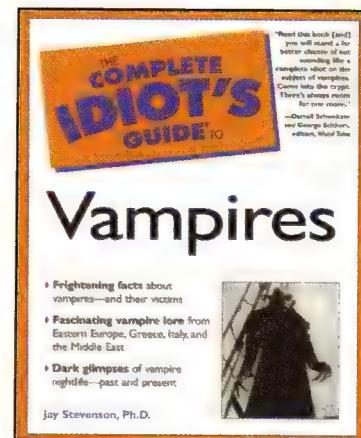
Hooper's greatest asset as a horror auteur



is his unsurpassed talent for fostering an atmosphere of uncertainty and discomfort, his films set in what Muir calls "a universe without order and without hope," in which "a benevolent God is missing in action." Muir painstakingly explores the director's myriad devices for creating this "new world disorder" through simple camera work, unorthodox sound mixes and scripting tricks. In Hooper's better films, the cumulative effect is a palpable sense of discomfort, eroding our belief that some invisible safety barrier exists between audience and film, essentially forcing us to experience the action as opposed to simply watching and listening. As Wes Craven says, "Tobe Hooper can convince you you're really at risk in a theatre. That's quite an accomplishment."

Muir also documents Hooper's penchant for subtle satire and his long-standing affinity for storylines featuring multiple antagonists working in tandem, an outwardly "normal" person covering for some monstrous entity who lurks in the shadows. And while he's clearly a huge fan, the author doesn't pull any punches when skewering Hooper's numerous missteps, i.e. *The Mangler* or the bafflingly shitty *I'm Dangerous Tonight*.

A bizarre twist saw Hooper's career derailed in the eighties when rumours began flying that box office champ *Poltergeist* had actually been directed by Steven Spielberg,



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Jay Stevenson, Ph.D.



who was officially credited as producer and co-writer. By cataloguing a host of compelling evidence, Muir builds an incredibly strong case in Hooper's favour, although it's unlikely that the matter will ever be resolved to anyone's satisfaction. At this point, the damage to Hooper's reputation may well be irreparable, given his well-known reluctance to play by the rules of an industry which treats even the most successful horror auteurs, including Carpenter and Craven, like unwanted stepchildren. Accordingly, Muir paints us a picture of an important horror icon destined to remain an outsider among outsiders.

John W. Bowen

**TOXIC TOONS:
COBWEBS AND VINEGAR**
Eric Pigors
www.toxictoons.com

Man, someone call me a nurse! I just flipped through Eric Pigors' second Toxic Toons art book, *Cobwebs and Vinegar*, and I think the sickness is spreading from the pages into my brain! That's half the fun with Pigors' artwork; those gruesome, slobbering, slimy little goofballs greet you at every turn like family, all too familiar and yet, always unique.

Cobwebs traces Pigors' evolution from



The Grim Reader

BE VERY AFRAID!

Edo Van Belkom, Ed.

Tundra Books

A selection of Canadian and American horror fiction writers try their hand at the *Goosebumps* formula with some strong results. The stories are all about adolescent fears — bullying, dieting, dating — but the outcomes draw very grown-up blood. Includes Edo Van Belkom, Michael Rowe, Tanya Huff and Ed Greenwood. Emma Anderson



DEAD ROSES FOR A BLUE LADY

Nancy A. Collins

Crossroads Press

Unlikely heroine Sonja Blue returns in Nancy A. Collins latest seven story offering. While this collection is full of the delicious viciousness and unapologetic violence we've come to expect from her fiction, it will be most appreciated by readers familiar with her earlier works. Fans, look for the six-page candid interview included within. **Monica S. Kuebler**



FRIGHTFUL FAIRY TALES

Dame Darcy

Ten Speed Press

First off, the title of this collection is deceiving, the six illustrated stories are not so much "frightful" as disturbing. Just like childhood fairy tales, Dame Darcy's intoxicating imagery and wordplay bring a magical quality to the pages. Unfortunately, a couple of the stories feel too bluntly moralistic rather than twistedly so, as one might expect from an otherwise delightfully unusual book. **Monica S. Kuebler**

PRIDE

Richard Matheson and

Richard Christian Matheson

Gauntlet Press

Call it an experiment, a collector's item, whatever you want, but *Pride* presents us with genre vet Richard Matheson's first newly written short story in twenty or so years, here in collaboration with his son. The idea was to have the two write their own versions of one story and work together on a teleplay, and Gauntlet's Barry Hoffman somehow convinced them to throw original (handwritten and typed) drafts along with final drafts into the bargain. An inside peek at how it all works. **Emma Anderson**



Cobwebs and Vinegar: Disney through a spookhouse mirror.

cut-and-paste cartoonist to full-time illustrator, proving along the way that he is well on his way to pioneering something new in the genre. Disney through a spookhouse mirror is a good way to describe what he does, though I guess Disney through a meat grinder would do just as well. Pigors traces his inspiration to having been bitten by a 313-pound rabid pig during a school field trip and, truth be told, the pig seems to have taken ahold of the guy's imagination — these toons may be cute in their own way, but up close they're rancid to the core. Pigors' macabre flair is rapidly endearing him to the hipsters of the horror scene and landed him illustration credits on a slew of albums and posters, from Electric Frankenstein to Cornbugs, Bill Moseley and Buckethead's weird musical trip.

Toxic Toons (see RM#26) started as a flash website but we've heard word that these meat-cleaving critters will be worming their way onto the screen sometime soon, in the form of stop-motion animated puppets no less. *Cobwebs and Vinegar* is your chance to get the jump on what the fuss is about, eye candy that tastes of blood

'n' puss 'n' goo goo muck. *Toxic Toons: Cobwebs and Vinegar* is available from the author directly at the Toxic Toons website (www.toxictoons.com).

Gary Pullin

The complete idiot's guide to vampires

Jay Stevenson

Alpha Books

The *Complete Idiot's Guide* series has made a fortune by teaching the average person the how-tos of anything from plumbing to flying a kite. The latest is Jay Stevenson's cheeky *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Vampires*, which aims to give the casual reader some insight into vamp history and lore. The book may be for idiots, but it's certainly not written by one — Stevenson navigates history and culture to give an intelligent account of how vampires became the all-time romantic bad guys.

His guide traces the roots of the vampire — Slavic peasantry, where plague breakouts were reason enough for villagers to dig up their dearly departed and start staking and chopping them with the firm approval of medicine. Appropriately enough,

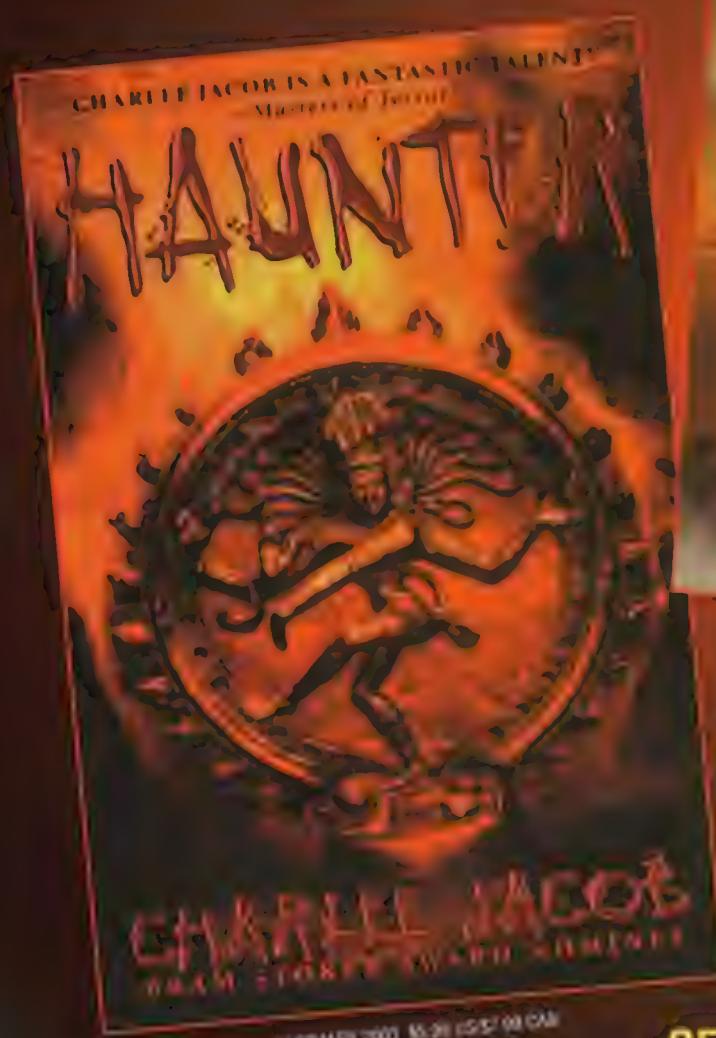
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The zombie movie encyclopedia

Peter Dendle
McFarland & Co.

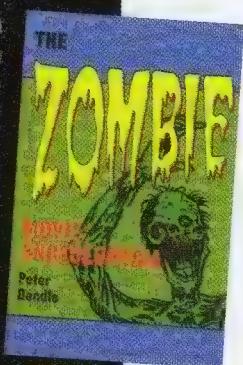
It seems like at least one tome with the name McFarland gets reviewed in every issue, and while most of the subject matter covered in these books is of great interest to me, it's always with a certain amount of trepidation that I accept one for review. Some have been astoundingly well-researched and well-written, enlightening even to a dyed-in-the-wool horror nerd like myself (*Herschell Gordon Lewis: The Godfather of Gore* springs to mind) while others were disappointing efforts by well-meaning but ill-equipped fanboys (*The Films of John Carpenter*). Happily, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia* falls into McFarland Category One.

The very term "encyclopedia" smacks of ambition at best and hubris at worst, especially when only one author is involved, but Peter Dendle acquits himself marvelously. Zombies, more than virtually any other variety of boogymen, are associated almost exclusively with the medium of film, and yet Dendle goes to great pains to examine the cultural and religious origins of the archetype throughout recorded history.

Of particular interest is his exploration of the zombie as a late bloomer among horror icons, exploding in cinematic popularity many decades after the vampire, the werewolf, the mummy and the alien had stolen the spotlight, despite existing in folklore for as long or longer. But most importantly, the breadth and depth of his knowledge of zombie films is, well, encyclopedic. It's all here in alphabetical order, from the patently obvious (Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy) to cult faves like *Shock Waves* and *City of the Living Dead* to obscurities that I'd wager even our own Gore-Met might have heard of but hasn't seen (although that's kind of going out on a limb).

I only hope that Dendle's interest in horror extends well beyond zombies; more examinations of our beloved genre's seemingly endless supply of subcategories from anyone this thorough, thoughtful and articulate would be very welcome.

John W. Bowen



Stevenson reminds us that the word "vampire" means "plague carrier" and that the original vampires were actually the bloated corpses of dead peasants, a far cry from sexual magnetism, charm, and aristocratic pedigree of later incarnations. Count Dracula and his brethren have a great many spin doctors to thank, such as Sheridan Le Fanu, Bram Stoker, Anne Rice, and the ongoing bandwagon that pumps out movie after movie to make these great anti-heroes among the greatest in the horror biz.

What makes the *Idiot's Guide* so palatable is that even though it never gets into any significant detail, it does pretty much cover every aspect of the vampire fact-sheet. As well, it divvies up the knowledge into easy to understand chunks, a mixture of cold facts, "dead giveaways" (i.e. common knowledge), "Grave Mistakes" (misconceptions) and Stalk Talk (an ongoing definition of terms). Hey, it isn't a university course, but in a weird way it is exactly that, a systematic overview of the vampire in history, literature, the occult and pop culture.

Because this is an *Idiot's Guide*, it also has a game called "What Kind of Vampire Are You?", and every chapter seems to have a gag, but that's what makes it an easy, breezy read. Make no mistake, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Vampires* might teach you everything you need to know about vampires without taking itself, or you, too seriously. Could you ask for anything more?

Nina Mouzitchka

DARK TERRORS 6

Stephen Jones and David Sutton, ed.
Gollancz/Orion Books

Editors Stephen Jones and David Sutton sum up their anthology pretty neatly when they note in their introduction that every story won't please every reader, especially in a book of this size. And with 33 stories total from writers established and new, they're right about that — there are certainly a few misses among the hits.

All the same, one can't fault them too much; the anthology format, after all, has kept horror literature alive and, well, mainly because, as the editors point out, it provides an outlet for writers in hostile genre territory. Support the cause and you'll surely discover some new talent that otherwise would pass you by.

This is the case with *Dark Terrors 6*, published out of the UK. Lots of dreadful surprises lie within, like Canada's own Gemma Files with a story called Job 37, which chronicles a day in the life of a maid who specializes in the cleanup of corpses. Files is no stranger to gruesome and she delivers the groceries, still wet and seeping through the paper bag! Co-Canuck and reigning queen of Canadian horror Nancy Kilpatrick strays from her vampire roots to explore the emotional territory of an abusive relationship with a Mexican witch burial ground as the backdrop. Spooky and real.

Dark Terrors 6 also solidifies a genre literary trend that seems to be all the rage, namely, a crossover to horror films and no wonder, since so many new and old genre writers have ventured into screenwriting. Mick Garris (*The Fly II*, *The Stand*, etc.) even sets his tale in Hollywood, and one of my personal faves, Graham Masterton, riffs from *Soylent Green* in a story that will swear you off burgers for the rest of your life.

Which takes us to Ramsey Campbell. Campbell's story about a man trapped in a wax museum that mirrors his past misses the mark somehow — great concept, confusing delivery. Other writers to look out for in this anthology include Kim Newman, John Burke, Tim Lebbon and Lisa Morton, whose *Death Of Splatter* might even disturb the most jaded gorehounds out there. That oozing cover art — by Gary Blythe — might sum this one up the best: it's pretty amazing even if it isn't perfect.

Mary-Beth Hollyer

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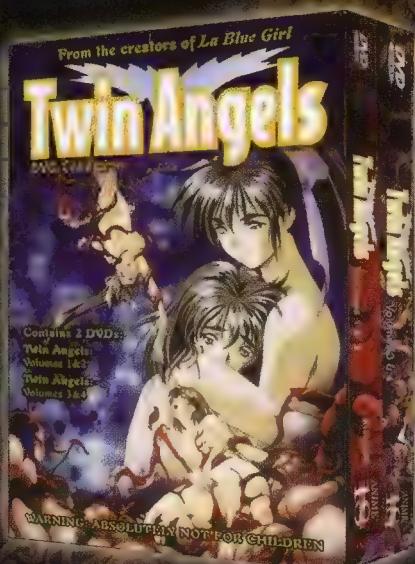
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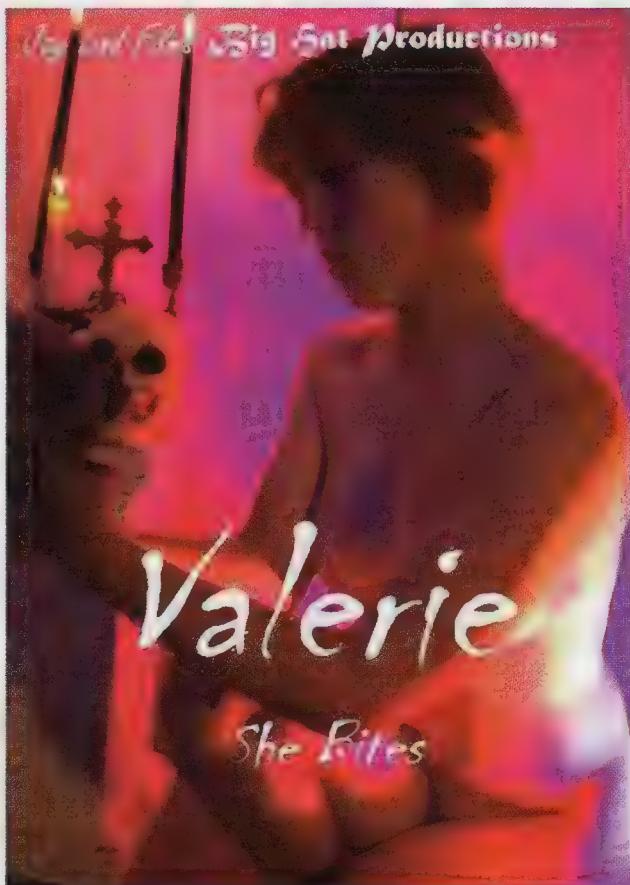
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ARMITAGE III

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Anime and cyberpunk go together like blood and guts. Cyberpunk's usually about grim, dystopian futures where corporations own everything, people are little more than rats in cages, and thanks to cybernetic brain and body implants, man and machine are coming together as one. All these themes are found aplenty in *Armitage III* (that's Armitage the third – this isn't a sequel).

The year is 2046; detective Ross Sylibus arrives on Mars for a new job and new partner, the non-regulation red-leather wearing Naomi Armitage. He scarcely steps off the shuttle before he's in the middle of a gunfight and a murder mystery – the messy remains of a country-western star stuffed into a suitcase.

Said star turns out to be a "Third", a virtually human organic robot far more advanced than the "Seconds" currently being blamed for stealing everyone's jobs. She's also the first in a string of brutal murders committed live-on-TV by a giggling madman, no less. Ross and the obsessed Armitage sort out a political conspiracy, feelings for one another, and the true purpose of the Thirds while trying to avoid the increasing number of people – killer included – who want them dead.

Armitage III works to create a real world full of little technological wonders taken for granted, political and social intrigue on Mars and Earth (known here as Red and Blue), and characters who aren't clichés. And it works. Like *Blade Runner*, a big theme of *Armitage III* is the struggle for morality in an increasingly chaotic world. Ross is saddled with replacement body parts (it's tough being a future cop), and is losing track of his humanity while Armitage, who knows she exists for a specific purpose, has to discover if she's any more than that.

About the only thing the release lacks is decent DVD extras (some artwork here, that's it). And make sure you don't confuse this with

Armitage III: Polymatrix: 30 minutes shorter, it features voices from Kiefer Sutherland (who reads his lines like a robot) and Elizabeth Berkley.

ARMITAGE - DUAL MATRIX

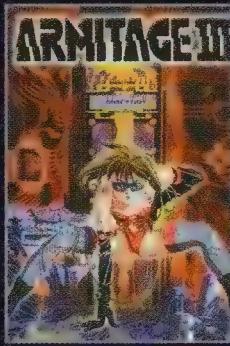
PIONEER
DUAL LANGUAGE DVD - 90 MINUTES

Armitage and Ross return in the sequel to *Armitage III*. They have new identities, a cozy home life and a little girl named Yoko. But the sudden destruction of an Earth research station, supposedly at the hands of berserk Second robots, sends them to Earth; she to track down Thirds she sensed in the explosion, he for a conference on robot rights brought on by anti-Second unrest. But then Yoko gets kidnapped, and it's time for Armitage to break out the red leather again.

Yes the violence is back (it's a rule that all anime cyberpunk has to open and end with a massacre), unfortunately, depth of story is not. The bad guy explains his entire plan to Armitage in two sentences, and the rest of the movie consists of Ross and Armitage rescuing Yoko and getting away. All the angst about the nature of being human has been replaced by the Power of Love™ making all things possible. There is a hint of the original in Yoko's realization of her mother's true nature

(thanks to some revealing bullet holes), but it's not followed up on, and neither are those confusing hints that Yoko is more than a precocious six-year-old. What we do get are some cool fight scenes. The showdown between Armitage and her roller-blading twin sisters up the sloping sides of an incomprehensibly gigantic abandoned spaceport is brilliant fun, but we also get some laughable CGI car chases that simply don't mesh with the high quality cel animation.

Juliette Lewis does a decent job of Armitage's English voice, while Ahmed Best (Jar-Jar Binks) continues to embarrass himself as the cringe-worthy computer hacker Mouse. The DVD extras consist only of a short "making of", but the liner notes offer sixteen pages of character bios and back story, and is completely amazing. If only the rest of this sequel was up to that kind of quality.



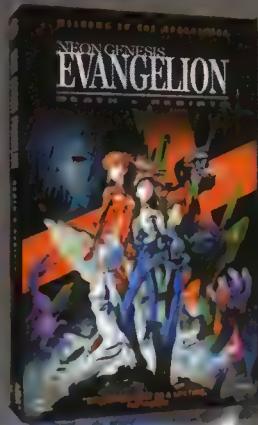
BLACK MAGIC M66

MANGA ENTERTAINMENT
DUAL LANGUAGE DVD - 50 MINUTES

Black Magic is a DVD reissue of a 1987 one-shot created by Masamune Shirow (of *Ghost in the Shell* fame) that plays like *The Terminator* on fast-forward. The movie opens up on a transport carrying a pair of robot assassins that crashes in a storm. The military moves in to contain them, but so does Sybil, a freelance reporter out to grab as much footage as she can for the midnight news. Only the scientist who programmed the robots used his bubble-headed granddaughter as a tracking test, and now Sybil has to find her before the robots do.

If you're looking for little things like plot and characterization, you've come to the wrong place (it's never clear why Sybil decides that it's her job to save the girl, rather than leave it to the 300 soldiers on the case). Nevertheless, *Black Magic* comes through with flying colours on ass-kicking and gratuitous nudity. Shirow's main love has always been complex machinery engaging in impossible maneuvers, and the M-66 assassins – with too many weapons, limbs that bend in unexpected directions, bad fashion sense, and every kung-fu move of Jackie Chan and Jet Li combined – fit the bill. It's a good hour's worth of "cool!"

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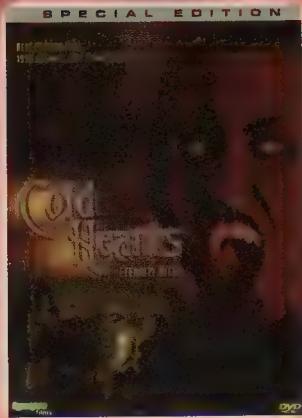
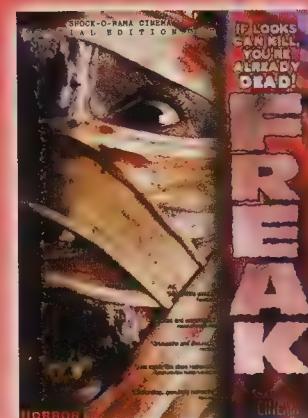
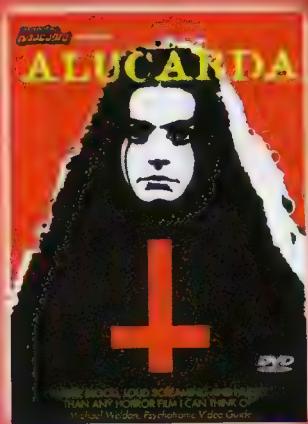
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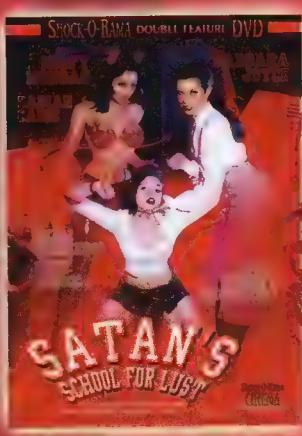
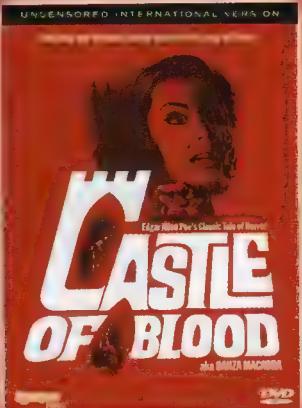
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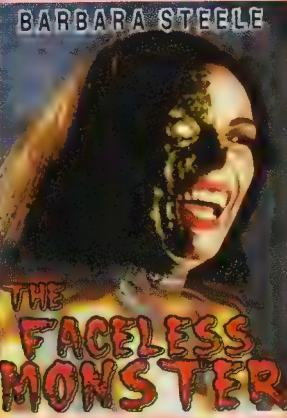
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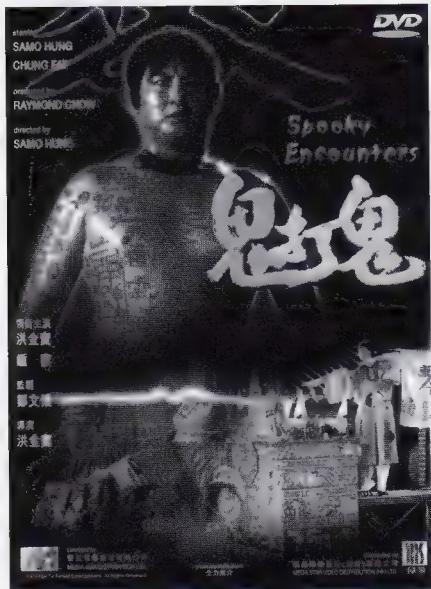
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The fantastic cinema of Hong Kong draws from a well of mythology five thousand years deep. This issue, we recommend two of the silly and significant. As Dr. Yuan says in *The Seventh Curse*: "Take my advice. Or I'll spank you without pants."



SPOOKY ENCOUNTERS DVD (1980)

Starring Samo Hung

Written and directed by Samo Hung
Media Asia Distribution Ltd.

Samo Hung is best known to North American audiences as the portly star of the cheesy cop show *Martial Law*, but at home Hung has been a significant force in Hong Kong cinema of the late '70s. *Spooky Encounters* is considered something of a milestone in Hong Kong horror cinema, the first film to meld martial arts with supernatural shenanigans and introduce the gyonsy, the hopping vampire of Chinese mythology.

Hung stars as "Courageous" Cheung, the self-professed bravest man in his feudal-era village. While Cheung takes bets to spend his nights in various haunted locales, his wife spends her nights in the arms of the village headman. Cheung almost catches the pair, and the headman hires a wizard to get rid of him. After barely surviving two nights with a hopping vampire, Cheung finds himself framed for the murder of his wife. With the aid of the brother of the hired wiz-

ard hitman, Cheung seeks to clear his name and end the evil wizard's unrelenting assault of black magic.

Spooky Encounters may be populated with a coterie of convincing characters, but this is indisputably Samo's show – his acrobatic ability and mastery of martial arts provide nearly all of the film's hilarity in some absolutely jaw-dropping displays of physical agility and tight kung fu choreography, drawing from such films as *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* and the *Abbot and Costello* monster mashes. Two sequences involving a disembodied hand and Cheung's own possessed hand were lifted by Sam Raimi for *Evil Dead 2*, and it has been said that Cheung was the inspiration for Bruce Campbell's Ash character.

The film is presented in the original 2.35:1 aspect ratio, and with the exception of some small scratches and speckling, it's an outstanding presentation. The optional, easy-to-read English language subtitles appear out of the picture on the bottom of the screen. The extras include a plot synopsis, theatrical trailer and four trailers for other Media Asia titles. This disc is highly recommended for Hong Kong horror fans and Deadites alike.



THE SEVENTH CURSE

DVD (1986)

Starring Chin Siu-Hou, Maggie Cheung and Chow Yun Fat
Directed by Ngai Kai Lam
Written by I Kuang

Lurking behind the rather innocuous cover art lies an unsung classic of Hong Kong cinema, an action-packed tale of curses and witchcraft. Dr. Yuan Chen (Chin) incurs the wrath of an evil sorcerer while on a scientific expedition in the jungles of Thailand, where he is infected with a blood curse and barely escapes with his life. A year later, the curse reactivates and his arteries start exploding again. His mentor, Wei (Chow), determines that the only way to save his life is to return to Thailand and wrest the cure from the eyes of a giant booby-trapped Buddha in the heart of the sorcerer's lair. Accompanied by Wei's niece, Tsai-Hung (Cheung), an obnoxious reporter, Chen and a local shaman battle the evil sorcerer for their lives.

Combining elements of the James Bond and Indiana Jones franchises, *Seventh Curse* is a voodoo stew of sprawling kung fu brawls, *Commando*-style military assaults and rampaging monsters. Director Lam keeps the expository scenes to a minimum, filling the screen with almost non-stop action and gouts of splashy gore. Heads are ripped off and spines sucked out, stomachs burst open to spill out maggots, and a tiny demon burrows through torsos and bursts out of stomachs. The giant *Alien*-like monster in the climax is not to be missed!

Chow, top-billed due to his superstar status in Hong Kong, is given little to do but smoke a pipe and dispense advice, although he does prove himself handy with a bazooka in the film's climax. Lam went on to make *Story of Ricky*, which needs no introduction to serious readers of RM.

The image quality of the import Universe Laser DVD is good but unimpressive, the digital encoding leaving a discernible hazy grain evident in the night scenes.

Extras include star bios of Chow and Cheung in Chinese, as well as a theatrical trailer and four trailers for other Universe features.

TIGER ARMY

The Early Years

by Aaron Lupton

The Early Years

THE SMOOTH CROON OF ELVIS, THE RELENTLESS SHREDDING OF A STAND-UP BASS, SOARING MELODIES, GHOSTLY ATMOSPHERE – IT ALL ADDS UP TO WHAT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S TIGER ARMY CALL AMERICAN PSYCHOBILLY, A FIERCE COMBO OF EUROPEAN PSYCHOBILLY AND AMERICAN ROOTS ROCK INFLUENCES. AND LIKE A LOT OF THEIR PEERS IN THE PSYCHOBILLY SCENE, THEY'VE TAKEN ON A FLAIR FOR THE DARK AND MACABRE....



NICK 13'S TOP 5!

1. CARNIVAL OF SOULS (1962)
2. DRACULA (1931)
3. WHITE ZOMBIE (1932)
4. THE BLACK CAT (1934)
5. PSYCHO (1960)

NOW PLAYING!

"When it comes to horror, I'm into atmosphere, subtlety and the psychological – those are the elements that I hope come across in our sound and aesthetic," explains guitarist/vocalist Nick 13. "I'm not so interested in the more cartoonish aspects of horror and I do consciously try to stay away from that in the music."

13 is the frontman for Tiger Army, a trio of psychobilly punk rockers who rose out of California's East Bay in the "dying embers of 1995." Fronted by 13 and rounded out by stand-up bassist Geoff Kresge (ex-AFI, Forbidden Dimension) and drummer Fred Telles, Tiger Army has just released *The Early Years* EP, a small gift to the fans who wait in anticipation for a third full-length album. Beginning in 1999 with a self-titled effort, and following up in 2001 with *Power of Moonlite*, Tiger Army's music has walked the line between sharp aggression, moody atmosphere and soulful American rockabilly.

As a result, their music has connected with a variety of subcultures, from punks to psychobillies to those of a goth persuasion. Perhaps they are brought together by the Army's devotion to horror, particularly those films that haunted drive-in theatres during the 1950s.

"Music and movies – specifically drive-in horror and juvenile delinquent films – were integral parts of the teenage culture that emerged in the US after WWII," explains 13. "And horror rock 'n' roll and rockabilly novelty singles were numerous in the fifties and early sixties."

13 traces the formal meeting of psychobilly and B-horror in the music of proto-psychos The Cramps and to the first true psychobilly band The Meteors ("These bands initially set the tone for the genre and

the horror element has remained a central part of it ever since," he says). But he credits a personal obsession with punk rock of the 1970s, combined with a late discovery of American 1950s rock 'n' roll for Tiger Army's particular style of three-piston punk and roll. These sounds, combined with his attraction to all things dark and fantastic, created a template for what has become an increasingly popular combination of cult lifestyles.

"I discovered the European psychobilly subculture, almost unknown in the US at the time, and it was all right there: punk aggression, rock 'n' roll roots, fifties and dark/horror aesthetics combined," says 13. "As soon as I found it, I knew it was what I'd been looking for my whole life."

The Early Years EP presents listeners with the band's now out-of-print 7-inch debut, as well as some rougher sounding demos for those psychos looking for the complete collection (see sidebar for full review). A key find for horror punk fanatics is no doubt a rare cover of the Misfits' American

Nightmare, a perfect fit, considering. However, a macabre sensibility is not the only thing Tiger Army shares with the music of Glenn Danzig; Samhain's London May did a short stint as drummer at one point in Tiger Army's short existence – the band boasted London May on drums, a former member of Danzig's influential band Samhain.

Unfortunately, the scenario did not exactly play out as a dream come true for 13 and Co.

"I was a longtime fan of Samhain and I thought it would be cool to play with him," he says, "[but] I was mistaken. Long story short, he decided to leave the band because we didn't get along. I'm still a

Samhain fan. There's no conflict there as he had nothing to do with the creation of their songs or sound, and Danzig himself actually played drums on about half of *November Coming Fire* [Samhain's seminal 1986 album]."

Outside of the world of horror films and books, the genre represents something larger than life for 13, and the band's name is a testament to those dark forces.

"The Tiger symbolizes the dark side of the universe to the Dragon's light side as an animalistic representation of the Yin Yang," he says. "For people who find themselves on this side of the world, are drawn to this music and share with us the Tiger's symbolic attributes of solitary independence, ferocity and courage, you are a part of the Tiger Army."

Enlist today at www.tigerarmy.com. Tiger Army Never Die!

TIGER ARMY

Early Years EP

HELLCAT RECORDS

If you have never heard the psychobilly punk of Tiger Army, this is probably the best place to start. Combining the band's first, now out-of-print *Temptation* EP with a previously unreleased cover of the Misfits' American Nightmare along with two demos, this disc reveals a rawer, less polished version of today's Tiger Army, known for combining traditional rockabilly with punk aggression and haunting melodies. Key tracks for collectors are no doubt a rendition of the Misfits' American Nightmare, which receives an even-more honky tonk vibe than it originally had, as well as a demo for Nocturnal, where frontman Nick 13's iron and gravel throat complements a uniquely brooding atmosphere to perfection. **AL** 



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named Vampirella, and some guy who used to drum for King Diamond? Kudos go out to Notre Dame for coming up with a fairly unique and intriguing schtick within metal (the band garbs itself with 1970s European gothic horror iconography). When all is said and done, what we've got here is a stale cross between Cradle of Filth and the Genitorturers, with some cool organ parts and mediocre vocals. AL ☠️/2



TESTIFY

Triviality Beyond Acceptance

VAN RICHTER

Hard-ass industrial from Essen, Germany, Testify returns to up the ante on their latest from Van Richter. I doubt I could reasonably get out of this review without comparing them to Rammstein, so I'll get that out of the way early. Broken English/German vocals ground out with pitch-bending urgency, heavy drawing guitar, plus the odd strange sample mixed in (a giggle here or an American astronaut there). These guys continue to carve the path first worn over by KMFDM, Skinny Puppy and even Fear Factory. Safe to say it's on the righteous side of tough-as-nails, relentless thrash 'n' crash industrial. On *Triviality Beyond Acceptance*, the buzzsaw tempo never waivers and Puppet breaks down in all the right ways, with a searing Ministry riff, a "Fragile puppet in the fire!" chorus and the sampling of a weird-sounding German child. This is eerie and unrelenting; raise your hands and Testify once more!

TD ☠️



VISIONS OF THE NIGHT

Envisioning the New Age

BLOODBUCKET PRODUCTIONS

Yikes! If you were expecting another melodramatic goth metal album from that cover art, you've come to the wrong place my dear fiend. This Toronto area metal band does not take the word "extreme" lightly. Unrelenting guitar shredding, blast beat drumming, demonic growls and a cello (!) add up to a truly evil sounding production. Visions Of The Night share all the morbid curiosities you would expect from black metal, including suicide, hate, and death – perfect for family get-togethers. This is music for people who hate music, the complete antithesis of anything remotely easy-listening. For the tried and true follower of underground extreme music, Visions Of The Night come recommended with all our deadly blessings. AL ☠️



MACHINES IN THE GARDEN

(Part 1 of the Cataclysm Singles)

Various

BLACKLIGHT RECORDS

While the title may imply a certain fragile beauty, *Machines in the Garden* is essentially a dark catastrophe of dial-up clicks and formless digital soundscapes. Rattling over fourteen bleak, wordless compositions from the US and Canada, the album uses contributions from

Blackhouse, Autovoice and Caul to reveal the union between man and machine as a dark, soulless endeavor. Amidst the disorder (most of which could actually thrive tossed up against an art flick), the stark brand of synthetic noise does certain justice to Suicide and Die Form, but it veers too far away from the conventional trappings of music for me to forgo suggesting you proceed with extreme caution. TD ☠️



BIRDFLESH

Night of the Ultimate Mosh

RAZORBACK RECORDS

Mix some dirty crust punk with standard grindcore, '80s thrash and some truly strange lyrics, and voila – you have Birdflesh, a sorta-gore grind band from Sweden

(where else?). If extreme music is your dish, this band should satisfy the blood thirst, following the competent trends set out by the majority of their Razorback record label's catalogue. What puts Birdflesh in a different cage, however, is their words. Oh yeah, all the themes that make grindcore the lovely genre that it is here covered in tunes like Coffinfucker, Gore In Gore Out, Gut To Kill, among other exercises in subtlety. Then there's Arabian Psycho, The Evil Pig, and Crows In The Nose. Here's an excerpt from the latter: "My head was ready to explode/One of my eyes popped out/The doctor ran away in tears/I guess he fell in love with me." Essentially the product of a home near hydro wires, or perhaps a premature end to some needed English lessons, Birdflesh stands as a particularly absurd entry in arguably the most absurd of all sub-genres. For an accurate assessment of the album's artwork, see Greg Chant's review for *New Math*, issue #27. AL ☠️

ONE MORE FOR THE HORROR-CORE!

EERIE LN.

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MUTHA/FIREBRAND RECORDS

Halloween just never ends at Eerie Ln., a place only a few streets down from Rue Morgue

we're sure. Populated by the likes of Boo Gruesome (vocals), Evil Lind (samples), Von Creepy (guitars), Hell Hound (drums) and Kayden Grimnir (bass), the band prowls and growls through a selection of tunes "blacker than the foulest witch." Their devotion to the cause is exemplary, and the cause – a vicious brand of horrorcore monster metal with echoes of early White Zombie – is now three albums deep and itchin' to bust the coffin lid into the big time. The creepy kids sing praises to The Tall Man on Mr. Phantasm, *Prom Night* on Hell-O-Mary Lou and Halloween horror on everything else. Don't come here expecting spooky ballads; Eerie Ln. is all about knives and chainsaws. Duck or run! Available from eerieLn.com. GC ☠️



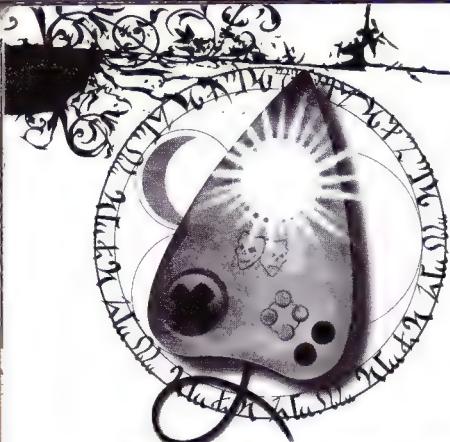
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Game Reviews by Marco Pecota

HIGHEST RATING IS THREE

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THE THING
PLAY STATION 2

BLACK LABEL GAMES
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UNIVERSAL GAMES

After a long hibernation, someone finally figured out that one of the greatest horror films, John Carpenter's *The Thing*, might make a good game. Give that man a raise! The film was a suspenseful whodunit — make that who-is-it — dropped into a sci-fi premise with a really nasty monster. But does the game do a good job of bringing the story back to life? Yup, and I loved it.

Set immediately after the events of the movie, *The Thing* is a well rendered game — fun, spooky, scary, gory and, above all, faithful to the dynamics of the story. You play the leader of a military rescue team charged with the investigation of the disappearance of an American scientific expedition that went missing in the frozen landscape of the Antarctic. You start off with three others in your team; a medic, an engineer and a soldier, all of whom act independently and either trust you, or feel that you've been taken over, in which case they will try to kill you. They are also prone to get freaked out and can suddenly run off and cower in fear. This trust/fear interface adds new dimension to game play by making each encounter a lot more stressful and forcing the player to cooperate with the team. The atmosphere is dark and suspenseful and you really never know when "the thing" is going to attack or, for that matter, if it already has. Subtle sound effects and lighting, weather and particle effects add to the suspense, but overall the graphics aren't on the level of *Resident Evil 0*. Still, *The X-Files*' Cancer Man (William B. Davis) lends his talents for a suitably creepy voice-over and Carpenter himself comes as Dr. Faraday. Also available for PC and X-Box.



unleash the evil

RESIDENT EVIL 0
NINTENDO GAMECUBE

CAPCOM

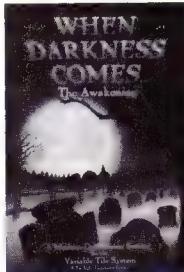
Capcom steps up yet again with *Resident Evil 0*, the highly anticipated next installment to the award-winning series (one of the top-selling games of all time for the PS2). Like the games before it, *RE* still generates goosebumps — I always get spooked by this series, even though I know there will be another zombie right around the corner.

RE:0 boasts the best graphics I have seen yet from any console video game, hands down. Smooth facial expressions and little details like the ultra-realistic sound of a rainstorm outside contribute significantly to the atmosphere by adding a lot of depth to the backgrounds. Not surprisingly, *RE:0* benefits hugely from the series' trademark splattery graphics, with cinematic sequences that have way more goo and gore going for them.

Although it's a prequel, the game offers up a similar storyline; players assume the role of S.T.A.R. operatives in or around Raccoon City. You are either rookie member Rebecca Chambers or "criminal" Billy Coen. The game is unique in that the two characters actually work together as partners and you can switch between controlling either. The baddies are mostly the same like the zombies and zombie dogs, but there are some new additions, like the slug creatures and a scorpion monster. All in all, this one is my favourite of the series and still a good old-fashioned American creep out.

🎮 PLAYABILITY

🕷 SHIVERS



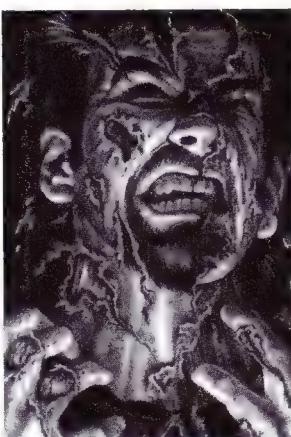
slay the undead

WHEN
DARKNESS COMES...
THE AWAKENING

ROLE-PLAYING/MINIATURE GAME
TWILIGHT CREATIONS INC.

You'll find all the components for a visual, quality role-playing experience here, including full colour map templates, six pewter figures and dozens of coloured counters. The game itself takes place in modern day small town America which has been overrun by all sorts of nastiness, including vampires, zombies and mummies. Your job? "To find and kill as many undead as you can without inducing panic in the town." Think of it as a generic game version of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Although *The Awakening* boasts scenarios written by some of the top writers in the field, I



found the rules cumbersome and unyielding to players unfamiliar with role-playing and miniature gaming. First timers might get disheartened by the complexity of the rules, some of which are poorly organized and, in some circumstances, not entirely clear.

Nevertheless, the game play is simple enough; players design characters and play them on the board with the pewter figures. The map templates are laid out according to the scenario; you place your pieces and then move around the board collecting items like holy water, shotguns and med-kits. Friends will try to aid you, monsters will try to kill you. Roll the dice and find out.



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PRESENTS

BLOOD FREAK



Starring Steve Hawkes, Dana Culliver and Brad Grinter
Written produced and directed by Brad Grinter and Steve Hawkes

Something Weird Video

USA - 1972

When it comes to the cult of cult cinema, the search for the worst is as urgent as the quest for the best. Ed Wood's *Plan Nine*, Al Adamson's *Dracula vs. Frankenstein*, H.G. Lewis' *Blood Feast*, Ray Dennis Steckler's *Incredibly Strange Creatures That Stopped Living and Became Mixed Up Zombies*... the list goes on and on. Indeed, there are so many worthy contenders for this dubious title that we couldn't possibly narrow it down to a single solitary film, or can we?

The contender would have to be incept on every level; production values would have to be candy bar quality, screenplay and direction would demand a moron's touch and the acting would simply scream for pancake flat. If there happened to be buckets of pointless sex and cheesy gore thrown in, then all the better. And if said epic just happened to be produced by a pack of turkey lovin', dope smokin' Jesus freaks, then son, we'd have a winner!

Yes sir, the long and winding road to celluloid atrocity takes many detours through the sublime and ridiculous but it ends here, with Brad Grinter's eye-popping, stomach-knotting, pant-peeing, jaw-dropping absolutely wonderfully horrendous excursion into straight-faced Florida-lensed cheese - the immortal one, the champeen of them all, ladies and gents, submitted for your rejection: *Blood Freak*!

Director Grinter was the right wing lunatic also responsible for glamour queen Veronica Lake's unfortunate swan song *Flesh Feast*. That film's weirdass plot involving the resuscitation of Adolf Hitler in order to feed him to hordes of mutant maggots seems utterly conventional compared to *Blood Freak*. Telling the timeless tale of a Jesus lovin' motorcycle ridin' Elvis clone named Herschell (questionably portrayed by Steve Hawkes, refugee from many a Spanish *Tarzan* serial), and his descent into dope smoking, turkey eating and finally, blood freaking, this is truly the wackiest, stoopidist tripped out exploitation film you've never seen. But now you too can rediscover this no-budget boggler of a sleazy, thanks to Something Weird Video,

who have not only re-presented this world class, literal gobbler in all its bleached-out glory, but also supplied the usual plethora of wanton extras including a perverse short called *Brad Grinter... Nudist! Hoo-boy!*

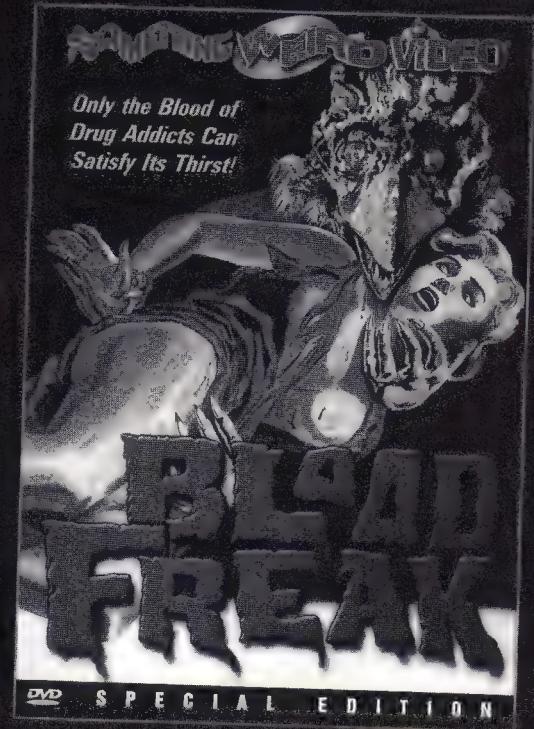
Apparently, Hawkes himself took over for Grinter near the end of the shoot when the, um, troubled production ran out of cash. The resulting feature has no style, no coherency and not a brain in its butterball basted head. The plot, such as it is, goes something like this: halfwit hero Herschell picks up a Bible-thumping honey named Angel (duh!) who inexplicably takes him to a party/orgy where we meet her ho-bag sister Ann. Baby sis Ann is into free love and substance abuse, something lily white Angel abhors. After Ann makes a play for Herschell's lewishes and gets rejected, she vows to bring ruin not only to the studly hunka burnin' bonehead but to her God fearin' sibling as well.

Herschell proceeds to move in with Angel's family and thanks to hussy Ann's slams against his masculinity, takes a toke on a home rolled blunt and becomes "hooked" on some sort of super weed. Next thing you know, former good ol' boy Hersh is working at the family's experimental poultry farm, eating gobs of greasy tainted Turkey meat and evolving into a drug-crazed, cannibalistic Turkey Monster! That's right kids, a TURKEY MONSTER.

Sporting a lovely and festive paper mache Thanksgiving centerpiece, Hersh runs around gobbling like an idiot, smoking the wacky tabackie and killing and eating as many local yokels as he can. Meanwhile, a none too shocked Angel prays for her human drumstick lover's smoked soul. And some cranberry sauce. Seriously. The whole subtle mood piece is framed by Grinter's hacking, chain-smoking, line-reading, moralizing philosopher/narrator spouting prophetic lines like "We all live a world subject to constant change..." Genius!

Made by people who seem to enjoy a puff now and then themselves, *Blood Freak* is the kind of sub-shit movie that stands defiant and proud, blissfully unaware of its own massive retardation. It is those very qualities that make this legendary, long unseen sub-atomic bomb of a flick the cock of the walk. Gobble it up, gang!

Chris Alexander



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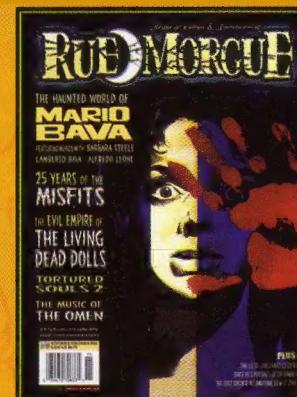
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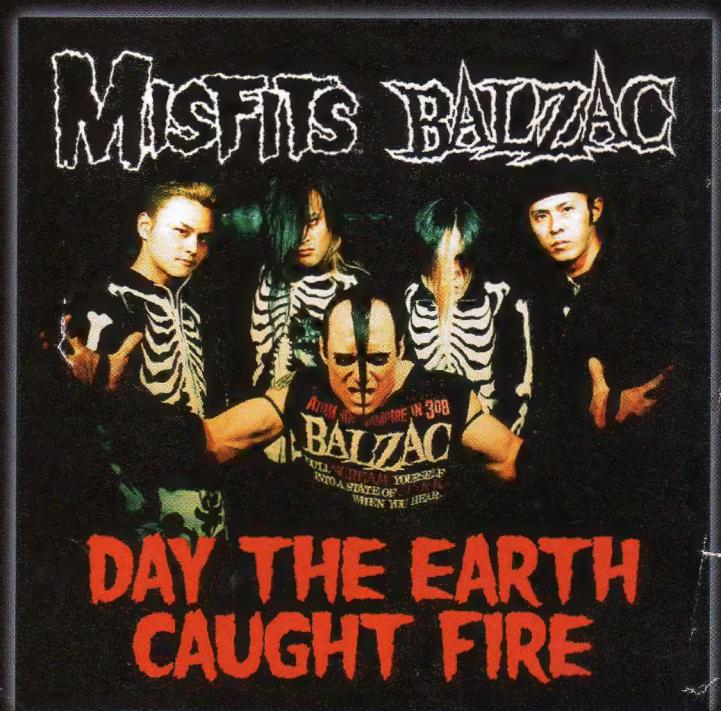
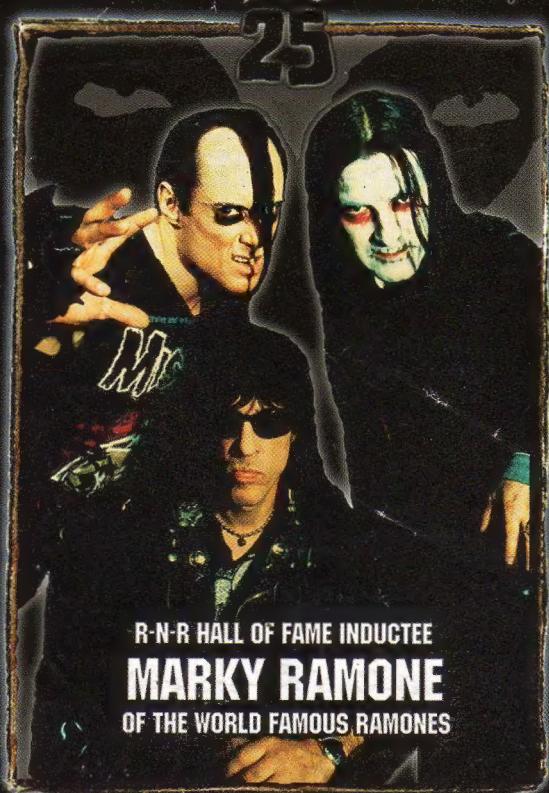


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